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## Clarence Rhett;

OR,

### THE CRUISE OF A PRIVATEER.

BY NED BUNTLINE.

#### CHAPTER I.

SHE was a beautiful vessel for those days—the year 1812. Sharp forward and aft, her masts not quite so raking as those of a clipper

long lower, topsail, topgallant and royal yards, and studdingsail booms below and aloft, made for and calculated to spread an enormous quantity of canvas for the size of her hull. Her main boom ran out full twenty feet over her stern, giving scope to stretch out her mainsail, while her gaff above, and long topmast were rigged to spread a large flying-gaff-topsail. Every stay fore and aft, had its stay sail bent, and she was ready to show all the canvas that could be set on a craft of her rig and size.

On deck, she was flush fore and aft—all

and foremast, and the third forward, just abaft the windlass.

Large arm chests, containing boarding-pike, cutlasses and battle-axes, were affixed to the bulwarks on either side of the quarter-deck, the chests for fire-arms being below in dryer quarters.

The vessel's hull was painted black, with a red ribbon just above her water-line, giving her a light and airy appearance on the water, and her masts and yards were all scraped and oiled, except at the heads and arms, which



"I would face a hundred dangers for one sweet smile from you," said the infatuated Robert Everett.

of modern times, but lofty and tapering, made of the pliant but tough Norway pine, which like the spirit of a proud, true man, will bend, but never break. Her tongue might have been a few tons over two hundred—not more. Her rigging was that of a brigantine, with very

the accommodations for officers and crew being below. Her bulwarks were low—low enough for three pivot guns, long eighteens to work over and clear of them. One of these guns was on the quarter-deck, just forward of the wheel, the next amidships, between the main

were painted black like the hull. Her rigging was stout and perfect, her ground-tackle new and good, and she appeared to be well found in every respect.

She was, as could be plainly seen, entirely new; her copper had never even been tar



nished by a change of water since she had been launched. On her round stern, in plain gilt letters, was her name:

"CLOUD-RIFT, of Salem, Massachusetts."

As she lay in the dock, in the last-named town, quite a crowd of persons were gathered round to look at and admire her, and to congratulate her rich and patriotic owner, Mr. James Everett, upon his success in building and safely launching the prettiest vessel that had ever come off the stocks at Salem.

The old gentleman, for a man bordering on sixty, was as lively and active, physically and mentally, as most men of forty, and personally superintended his large business as an importer, shipper, and wholesale merchant; doing more in his general line, than all the other merchants in town. He was a widower, with two children. The eldest just turned twenty-one, being a son, unfortunately for his father as well as for himself, wild, reckless, and dissipated. The other child was a mild-tempered, loving, and beautiful daughter, in her nineteenth year, at the date when this story opens.

Robert Everett, the son, had no friends, except the dissolute companions with whom he spent his money—but Nellie, the daughter, had not an enemy on earth. She had many friends, and some who sought to be upon nearer terms than those of friendship; for the only daughter of a man well up in the millions, was sure to draw the attention of marriageable men, even if she had not been possessed of great beauty, considerable talent, and a warm, true heart. But of all her suitors, and there were many, no one could boast of having drawn from her a mark of preference. They were all treated politely; but when it came to a proposal, none were preferred to papa—she coolly said she had not thought of such a thing as marriage, perhaps she never should. Her heart was free and so should be her hand.

But there was one young man who always visited her father's house when he came in from sea, who never met or parted with her without receiving a warm pressure from her soft hand; and there was ever a brighter color in her cheeks, and an extra brilliance in her dark hazel eyes when he was present.

This young man, Clarence Rhett, had been, from early boyhood, in the employment of her father, and had worked his way along from an orphan boy of fifteen, before the mast, to the first mate of the largest and best East India ship owned by Mr. Everett. He had known no home but the house of Mr. Everett when ashore; for both of his parents had died of the same disease, yellow fever, brought in by a Havana trader, at the same time leaving him literally alone in the world.

All the wages he earned after deducting what he needed for clothing and such necessities, he placed in the hands of Mr. Everett for investment. And his steady attention to duty, his high moral principles, his skill as a seaman, as attested by every captain that he had ever sailed with, and his often proved bravery, had made him a great favorite with the old merchant, who ever kept a close watch over the persons in his employ, rewarding the meritorious, and discharging the needless and unworthy.

And now avast with this explanatory and necessary episode, and we shall go back to our story.

Mr. Everett was on the wharf, to which his brigantine had just been hauled in from the yard where she had been rigged and fitted out, and his friends were crowding around to look at his vessel, and speak their praise of her beauty and his loyalty; for it was well known that he had built her to act as a privateer for the protection of American commerce, and the destruction of British power and property on the ocean.

He received them and their praises in his usual cheerful way, answering their questions, and listened to their suggestions as complacently as if he had not the care of four or five millions of active dollars in his mind.

But an unusually pleasant smile was on his face, as a tall, sun-burnt young man, with nut-brown hair and blue eyes, dressed in nautical style, approached him with a look of respect.

"You sent for me Mr. Everett?" said he.

"Yes, Captain Rhett," replied the old merchant, extending his hand and grasping that of the young man warmly.

"Captain! exclaimed the young man; 'though I have served you for nearly fifteen years, Mr. Everett, I did not know I had ever received or deserved any higher title than that of mate of the good ship *Hoogly*.'

"You are captain now, sir, and there is your craft. She is a beauty, has been named by my Nellie, and you must take care of her. Come abroad with me, and take a look at her, and tell me if there is a single thing wanting, below or aloft."

There was a loud cheer from the crowd on the wharf when they heard this announcement, for young Rhett had many friends and few enemies.

He was so taken back by this unexpected announcement of his promotion to the new and splendid vessel, that he could not make a reply at first, but followed his generous patron and friend on board, and down into the cabin, in silence.

He was astonished at the elegant manner in which the vessel was fitted up. Her cabin looked more as if it had been intended for the yacht of some nobleman, than for an American merchantman or privateer. The mouldings of the cabin were of white and gold, the berths were curtained with silk and velvet, the chairs and settees were solid mahogany, everything was elegant, massive and costly. But what pleased Clarence Rhett most was that in the small after-cabin, always reserved by the captain for his own especial use, there hung the portraits in oil, faithfully executed, of the merchant himself and his beautiful daughter.

"As I built the craft, and Nellie named her, we concluded that our picture ought to go with her," said Mr. Everett, when he saw the eyes of the young captain fall admiringly upon the pictures, "you must never let a Johnny Bull get hold of them."

"They shall sink to the bottom of the ocean with me first, sir!" said Rhett, warmly. "But, Mr. Everett, this matter takes me altogether by surprise. I heard, when I came in the *Hoogly* the other day, that you had built a new vessel, but I knew nothing of her rig, or what trade she was intended for. Have you considered, sir, before offering me this splendid command, how young I am, and that you have many older and more experienced men in your employment than I am?"

"I have considered, Captain Clarence Rhett," said the old merchant, good-humoredly, "that you brought in the *Hoogly* safe, after a long and stormy voyage, with half her crew disabled, and her captain sick and unfit for duty nearly all the time you were out. And I have also considered that when the *Hoogly* was attacked by six Chinese piratical junks, you, with your undaunted courage, beat them off, and, by your cool management of the ship, you ran down and sunk four of them, thus saving for me a ship and cargo worth full five hundred thousand dollars. And, hold on, sir, not a word till I have done—I have considered that you have sailed for me over fifteen years, now, without ever having been complained of by a single captain for neglect of duty, dishonesty, or immoral conduct—I am not done yet, be patient, young man, and wait until I have said my say out. You have, during that time, placed money in my hands, which, principle and interest, amounts now to over fourteen thousand dollars, just half the cost of this vessel and her outfit, this cabin furniture excepted, which is a present from Nellie. Now, sir, you are captain of the *Cloudrift*, at any rate, and, if you choose, you are half-owner. Your money will take just half of her. What do you say?"

"That I except your investment of my money gratefully, sir, and I will try to make this vessel the most profitable craft you ever

owned. I know, by her fitting out, that you intend her as a privateer."

"Yes, she has berths and arms for forty men. I want you to ship a young American crew, for I believe in war-time especially, with the great Washington, that we should put none but Americans on guard."

"I agree with you, sir, and I think I can soon pick up a brave and trusty crew. You are going to lay the *Hoogly* up, and there are at least fifteen of her men, true and tried, who will go with me anywhere."

"That is excellent. They have seen you fight, and know what you are made of. And now, my dear boy I have one unpleasant condition to make with your appointment. It is, that you take my son, Robert, out with you, as first or second mate, I care not which. He is so dissipated and so worthless on shore, that I must send him to sea again, as I have done before, and all the hope I have of ever saving him, is from your firmness and great moral example. Take him and be as strict with him as you please; keep him and your crew under the strongest kind of man-o'-war discipline, and he may yet turn out to be something better than a spendthrift and sot."

"Mr. Everett," said Rhett, sadly, "Robert has always evinced a bitter hatred toward me. You remember how he once slandered me, for the purpose of getting you to discharge me."

"Yes, my dear boy, I remember it, and how his falsehoods were disproved almost before I had taken a second thought upon them. But try to forget and forgive that, and, for my sake, see if you cannot make a man of him. Remember he is my son, wicked as he is, and my only hope of him is that you can manage and reform him."

"Well, sir—I will try. Let him be rated as second mate, for I would like to have Cromwell, the second mate of the *Hoogly*, as my first. He is brave, prudent; a splendid seaman, and true man."

"Then let him be first, by all means, and Robert second. You will find a new sextant, quadrant, and chronometer, in your state-room, and a full set of charts. Also a spy-glass and some tools to use when you get into action. The pistols once belonged to my father and they are regular 'Joe Matons.' The sword is one which my father took from a French naval officer, in the time of the old French and Indian war, for he was a royal volunteer in the great Canada expedition that went to help Wolf make a landing. And now, my dear boy, we will go ashore, for it is near my dinner time, and I told my Nellie, this morning, that I should bring Captain Clarence Rhett home to dine with me. So come along, for my dear child must not be disappointed. She is my better angel, while Robert, in his wilfulness, throws a continual shadow over my heart. But you will bring him around—I know you will."

And the old merchant led the way ashore.

## CHAPTER II.

NELLIE EVERETT was her father's house-keeper. She had all the servants she desired, but she kept the chief supervision of all the household matters in her own hands. The result was that everything went as regular as clock-work there—everything too, of household use, was as neat as a pin. Tin, copper, and brassware shone like silver and gold. Her crockery had almost as pure an enamel as her alabaster-like forehead. Her tablecloths and napkins were as white as her own fair hands. In short, everything looked pure and wholesome.

When the old merchant and Clarence Rhett arrived at ten minutes before the regular dinner hour, Nellie was in the parlor ready to receive them; for a window from the dining-room opened on the long, elm shaded street up which they came, and she had seen them coming several minutes before they arrived.

As usual, she greeted her fond old father with a kiss, a ceremony which doubtless would



have been quite agreeable to Clarence Rhett; but to him she extended her dainty little hand, and said, while a rosy smile lighted up her lovely face:

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Rhett."

"Captain Rhett, my dear child—CAPTAIN Rhett, of the American Privateer *Cloud-rift*!" said the old gentleman, tapping his daughter playfully on the cheek with his long, bony fore-finger.

"Then he has accepted the command," said Nellie. "I congratulate you, Captain Rhett, and wish you success in everything you undertake, both afloat and ashore."

"I could not refuse such a noble command," said Clarence, gravely. "Especially since it has been honored with such especial care in its fitting out below as well as aloft, and has such pleasant souvenirs for me to take care of. I am not a boaster, Miss Nellie; but I shall try to prove worthy of the responsibility placed upon me by your father's great kindness."

"I know you will, Clarence—I mean Captain Rhett. I am so forgetful!" and a roseate blush suffused the face of the beautiful girl.

"I had rather be plain Clarence to you, Nellie," said he, in a low tone, "than to be captain before all the world."

Nellie's father had gone into the hall at that moment, to put his hat and cane in their accustomed place, so he did not hear that low-voiced remark, or see the love-light which sparkled in two pairs of eyes.

"I suppose dinner is ready, Nellie," said her father, returning to the parlor, most probably in time to prevent a catastrophe; for if ever sweet lips pouted for a kiss, then had Nellie's an instant before.

"In just three minutes, father," said Nellie, looking at her watch—a good sized, heavy gold time-piece, not one of those little Geneva bits of fashionable finery of the present day.

"Then by the time Clarence and I have paid a visit to the wash-room, it will be ready," said the old merchant.

"Captain Rhett!" cried Nellie, with a gay laugh, as she ran out of the room.

"I corrected her, and she is bound to keep me straight, I see!" said Mr. Everett, with a laugh. "I suppose I need not invite you to the sideboard, Clarence, to find an appetite in any of the old black bottles there."

"No, sir," said Clarence. "I have never forgotten the advice you gave me when I was a boy of fifteen, to let rum and tobacco alone. Neither of those articles have ever yet passed my lips, and never shall. I have seen too much evil result from the use of liquor, to even feel a desire for an artificial stimulant."

"I am glad to hear you say so my young friend. If half my fortune would induce my only son to be half as temperate as you are I would sacrifice it without a murmur. But come—we must not be a minute behindhand at the table, or there will be a frown on Nellie's face. She is like clock-work in her arrangements, and cannot bear to have the soup cool a minute in the tureen."

### CHAPTER III.

In a private room in the largest tavern in Salem, (hotels were not known then,) four young men were seated at a card table. All were fashionably dressed, and each wore that unmistakable look of dissipation, which, even at the present day, is too often seen on faces which otherwise would be intelligent and manly—we might say almost as handsome.

Money—gold and silver, lying in various sized piles before the players proved that gain, rather than amusement, was that for which they were seeking, with varied success; for where one wins, another must as surely lose. They did not differ much in age; the oldest not being over thirty, or the youngest under twenty-five years.

The youngest was Robert Everett; and he, too, had the hardest and most dissipated look of them all.

"And so, Bob, your old man wants to send

you off to sea," said the oldest of the party, and the son of a minister in town, whose grandfather had been distinguished in former days for his zeal in persecuting witches.

"Yes Bill," replied young Everett, "and I suppose I'll have to go, for he says he'll cut off all supplies if I don't. As it is he is going to refuse to pay my debts, I fear, and I shall be in a scrape if he does. Going to sea is all that will keep me out of jail. It is not the mere going that annoys me, for I have been on blue water, and rather like it; but he sends me out as a subordinate, when I ought to go in command."

"How so? And what do you think of going in?"

"Why, in the new clipper brigantine that father launched last week. She is fitted out complete for a privateering cruise, and she'll make her mark, too, if she is handled well."

"Who is to be her Captain?" asked Bascomb, or Bill, as young Everett called him.

"That is the thing I am almost ashamed to tell. The fellow was once a poor boy, whom my father took into his employ out of charity. He has hung on with him for fifteen years, and came home in one of our East India ships as mate, the other day. Now father puts this upstart over me, and makes one of his cronies first mate, leaving me only as second. It is too bad—too bad! I'd kick against it, if I was out of debt, and a few hundreds ahead. It is too bad to have to serve under a fellow that was a beggar a few years ago, and who now puts on as many airs as he could if he was a bred and born gentleman."

"What kind of a sailor is he?" asked the card-partner of young Everett, a young man named Ottis, who was spending the income of a fond mother, who had only been a widow for a couple of years.

"Oh, he is good enough there, for he has been brought up to it—has had his hands in slush and tar since he was fifteen years old. He couldn't get to be first mate of an East Indiaman without he was a good seaman, and a first-rate navigator."

"Will he fight?" asked Ben Brattle, the partner of Bascomb in the game.

"Yes, he has the name of it with those he has sailed with. I don't know much about him. I always despised and hated him, and I always shall. He is a perfect milk-sop, never touches liquor, never smokes a pipe, never swears. I have tried my best to get the old man down on him but never could succeed. They make more of him at our house than than they do of me, but it will not be so always. When my old man kicks the bucket and goes to that better world that your old governor, Bascomb, is so fond of talking about, I'll make him walk! You can swear to that."

"He might be made to walk before that!" said young Ottis, who was noted for his reckless, dare-devil character. "You're a good shot, Bob. When you get off on this cruise, why don't you force a quarrel on him, and get me for a second, I'd bet it would be his first and last duel."

"He will not quarrel with me. I tried that before he went on his last voyage," said Everett.

"Slap him in the face," said Bascomb, with a laugh. "That would be apt to rile him."

"I tried that very thing!" said Everett, "and the infernal rascal laughed, as he knocked me down. I went and told my father, and he had said he had but one fault to find with him, and that was, that he did not horsewhip me within an inch of my life."

"What is his name?" asked Brattle.

"Clarence Rhett!" replied Everett. "His father was once a merchant, but had bad luck and broke down just before he died. I believe he and my father were old friends, but that is no reason why he should pick up his beggarly son out of the gutter and put him over me."

"That's so," said Ottis. "Are you not going to play any more to-night, Bob?"

"No—luck is against me in everything. I've lost on every hand."

"There's nothing like fighting luck! It is bound to change some time or other," said Bascomb, glancing complacently at his own large winnings, for luck had been with him, at least.

"Well, I shall not fight it any more now, at any rate," said Everett, "I've got a plan in my mind, which I mean to go to work on."

"Is it a secret," asked Ottis.

"No—not to you, boys. But I don't want it to get to the ears of Rhett. There is a crew to be shipped for the brigantine right away, as soon as possible, and I am to help to get men for her. Now, my plan is, to get as many fellows on board as I can, who know and like me, and whom I can influence. Then, if anything turns up while we are on a cruise, by which I can get him into a scrape, or get him out of the way, I'll have the brig, and a good part of the crew all right."

"Good! I see through that. I've a con-founded notion to go with you," said Ottis.

"And I too," added Brattle.

"Do it, boys—do it, and your example will bring in every one of our set in town, and we can muster full thirty, all told, if not more."

"That's so," said Bascomb, "and I'll try a cruise, at any rate. If we don't make this Mr. Clarence Rhett see stars before the first cruise be out, it will be because the devil won't help his own."

"Then I'm contented to go to sea in the *Cloud-rift*!" cried Everett, "for, with my own set on board, Clarence Rhett will not be my master a great while."

"That's so; and now I move that every one of us go recruiting, being careful not to get a man who will not work for and with us up to the very handle!" cried Brattle.

"Agreed!" said Ottis, "I'm good for a half dozen recruits, at least. Some of them will be rough customers, but they will go to old Nick for me as long as I lead the way."

"I can count up a dozen, but none of them are members of my old man's church!" said Bascomb, with a laugh.

"Well, go ahead, boys, but be careful that Rhett don't smell out our game, or he'll put a stopper on it. I shall pretend to be very friendly to him, now, and to be brimful of patriotism; while, if the truth were known, I don't care a cent whether England whips us in this war, or whether we whip her. One of these days, I'll be rich at any rate, and you may bet your largest pile that I'll make money fly then. The old man stares, now, when I run through with forty or fifty dollars in a day; but, when his eyes are shut, I'll go hundreds where tens have to do me now."

"Bravo? I like spirit, and Bob Everett is the man that has no lack of it!" cried Ottis, pocketing his money, for the others were taking up their stakes.

"That's so!" said Bascomb. "And now, boys, it is all understood, isn't it? We're to ship, and get as many more of our set to go as we can."

"Yes," said Brattle. "Where do we sign articles?"

"On board," said young Everett. "I heard Rhett say that he would hoist his recruiting flag to-morrow morning, and go to sea the moment he had a crew; for everything is ready aboard the vessel for a cruise—guns, powder and shot all aboard, and her stores ready to go into her hold the hour they are wanted."

"We'll have to watch chances to run out. The English have got men-of-war all along our coast," said Bascomb.

"Yes; but if that brig gets a gun-shot distance outside, the fastest vessel in the English navy will never catch her," said Everett. "She carries canvas enough for three times her tonnage, and she is as sharp as a wedge forward and aft."

"Yes—I saw her on the stocks, but little did I dream I'd ever sail in her, or any other craft," said Ottis. "Mother will kick up a devil of a fuss about me going, and shed a bucketful of tears; but that is all the good it will do, for when I make up my mind to a thing, the devil



woman knows I'll do it, if it costs me a broken neck."

The young men now rose up and left the room, their understanding as to the future being complete.

#### CHAPTER IV.

DINNERS in 1812 were not so ceremonious in the United States of America, as they are in 1866; nor was it considered necessary, even in a mansion so decidedly aristocratic as that of Mr. Everett's, the millionaire, to have a dozen different courses, with a change of wine to each course, *a la Delmenico* of the present era.

Mr. Everett invariably took three glasses of old port wine during dinner, and he always had choice wines at hand for the use of his guests, who chose to partake of them; but he had too much sense and true politeness, to press wine upon any one who did not wish it.

His family dinners did not occupy a great deal of time, and within less than an hour from the time that he and Clarence Rhett joined Nellie at the table, they were all three again in the parlor.

"Take a holiday to yourself to-day, Clarence," said Mr. Everett, "and to-morrow commence getting your crew for the brig. Nellie here wants to hear all about your adventures with those Chinese pirates, and you can spin the yarn to her, while I take my after-dinner nap. I know it is a lazy habit, but I got into it when I went down to Cuba to spend a winter, and can't break it off."

And the worthy old merchant went to take his *siesta*, leaving Nellie to entertain Clarence Rhett.

However much Robert Everett despised the young seaman for what he considered his low origin, there was no such feeling in the breast of his fair and gentle sister. She had known Clarence since her earliest childhood. As a boy, he had ever been kind to her when a little girl, and never had come home from a voyage, without bringing her some little token of his remembrance of her while abroad. For this she had learned to love him, while yet a child, for her own brother never treated her with affection; and her love grew with her own growth, almost without her knowledge, until, arriving at the verge of womanhood, she began to blush and tremble as she felt how much stronger it was than mere friendship. She tried to conceal her feelings from him, and from everyone else; but the beating of her own heart, whenever he came into her presence, told her but too well how much that heart throbbed for him.

That he loved her, he did not doubt, though he never had made a direct avowal: for Clarence Rhett knew that he was yet comparatively a poor man, and he was too proud and too sensitive, to aspire to her hand while he yet felt himself dependent upon her father's kindness. Yet eyes answering eyes, had often told the tale of love, by the lips yet unspoken.

Nellie was coquettish in her ways, but she never had tampered with his honest feelings, and he respected her the more for it. When Mr. Everett went to his chamber to take his usual *siesta*, without any prudishness, she took a seat by Clarence on the large, old-fashioned sofa, and said:

"Now, Captain Rhett, I am ready to hear of the desperate encounter which you had with the pirates."

"Not so very desperate," said he quietly. "These Chinese are cowardly wretches, and it is not a matter of wonder that a few determined men could beat off a couple of hundred of them, especially as we had superior arms, and a ship which we could handle as we pleased while we had a working breeze. Their miserable junks are good for nothing except when running off before the wind."

"You will have a different class to encounter now," said Nellie; and she sighed as she thought of the peril to which Clarence Rhett would be subjected when he went to sea in the *origiantine*.

"Yes—the English proudly boast that they rule the waves," said Clarence with a smile. "But right is superior to might, and our cause is too just for its defenders to be doubtful over it; and so far as the *Cloud-rift* is concerned, if she does not greatly belie her looks, I need never run any risk of being over matched in fight. I think she can out-sail anything afloat, and when it will be imprudent to fight, I can run away."

"Yes, if you will!" said Nellie. "I only fear that you will be too anxious to serve your country, and to sustain the honor of your flag, to pause and consider what the odds may be that appear against you."

"I will pause, Nellie, I promise you; for the trust which your father reposes in me is very great, and I must and will be prudent. In fact, my selfishness will demand that, for your father has permitted me, with the savings of years, to become half owner of the brig, and if I am only fortunate in taking prizes of value, I may yet be rich enough to——"

Here Clarence Rhett paused, and blushed like a young school girl caught kissing her sweetheart.

"Rich enough to what, Clarence?" asked Nellie, a rich smile brightening her own sweet face, as she spoke. "Tell me, for I want to know what makes you, a man, blush like a woman."

"Rich enough to tell the only woman on earth that could win my heart that I love her, and want her to become my wife!" said Clarence, blushing, and trembling, too, at his own temerity.

"What! Captain Rhett in love! And waiting to get rich till he declares his passion? That is romantic, indeed. And yet, how singular. I thought love was blind, and had no eyes for gold and jewels!" cried Nellie, in a bantering tone. "Do I know the happy being who has been so fortunate as to fix the fickle heart of a sailor?"

"If you do not know her, no one else does," said Clarence, with a sigh.

"Then I may be asked to act as bridesmaid, when the happy day arrives," said Nellie, still speaking in a bantering tone. "I shall pray for your success in making a fortune as rapidly as possible. But you have not told me the name of the lady. Pray let me keep that secret for you. I will only tell Nettie Hambone and Lizzie Schmidt of it, and then it will never go farther than all over town."

"Oh, Nellie, what a tease you are!"

"Do you think me so, Clarence? Well, just tell me the name of your lady-love, and I will keep it a secret from all but her."

"Not till I can feel independent, kind Nellie. I can love, and let love feed upon hope, as it has for years past," replied Clarence. "I thought you wanted to hear about those Chinese pirates."

"So I did, until you touched a subject of far greater interest," said Nellie.

"What is there in my future fate that can interest you, Nellie?" asked young Rhett, gravely.

"Clarence!"

"She only uttered his name, but her tone, and her look as it left her lips, spoke a volume of reproach to him."

The next instant she burst into tears.

"Nellie, dear, dear Nellie!" he cried. "I did not mean to wound your feelings. Rich or poor I cannot keep it longer. I love you better than life, a thousand fold. For long years, you, and you only, have filled my heart. To be worthy you and your love, has been my only study—to win at last, my fondest hope."

"And yet you ask me what can be my interest in your fate?" she sobbed. "Oh, Clarence I dare not trust my lips to say what my heart feels. I shall not pray for you to become rich in the perilous life you are now to lead, but I shall pray, oh, how fervently, that God may bring you back safe to me. I care not if it is unmaidenly—you shall know that wherever you go, you carry the heart of Nellie Ev-

erett with you. I never have loved, and never can love another."

Tears of joy, such tears as were no disgrace to his manhood, gushed from the eyes of Clarence Rhett when he heard this avowal; and he pressed the yet sobbing girl to his breast, while he imprinted the first kiss of affection upon her spotless brow.

Forgotten in the bliss of that moment, was all the distinctions of rank and wealth. Their young hearts knew no thought, but that the fountain of love was open to flow on while the current of life remained unfrozen.

And thus for the time, in a dream too sweet to be broken, let us leave them.

#### CHAPTER V.

For three days only had the starry flag of the American Union been flying at the mast-head of the peerless *Cloud-rift*, and yet in that brief time had Clarence Rhett secured a full crew of sixty men; all that he could accommodate comfortably on board, and all that were required to man, work and fight her. It seemed as if all the young men of Salem were wild for a chance to go to sea in a splendid craft.

Some of the men were very young, others wild and reckless in character; but Rhett had about twenty old and tried sailors, whom he had known for years, and with these and a strict discipline, he calculated upon making all of his crew serviceable. His first officer he knew to be a sterling man, upon whom he could place entire dependence; and young Everett seemed to have turned over a new leaf in the book of life, since his appointment to the privateer. He had not only shown great zeal in recruiting men for the vessel, but had entirely abstained from the dissipation which had hitherto made his career so disgraceful.

So pleased was his father with these marks of his reformation, that he paid all of his debts, and also promised that if he continued to act as well after a cruise or two in the *Cloud-rift*, he would build a twin vessel to her, and give him the command.

Robert Everett could play the hypocrite well. He schooled himself to an apparent forgetfulness of all his former hatred of Clarence Rhett, and treated the latter with an appearance of deference and respect, which completely blinded the warm-hearted and opened-natured young captain to his real designs. He thought that his reformation was genuine—his zeal and patriotism real, and that he was determined to make his present and future atone for his past misconduct. He so expressed himself to Mr. Everett and to Nellie.

The former was delighted, but the latter knew too well the selfish nature, and the serpent-like cunning of her brother, and she cautioned her lover not to trust him too far. She hoped, she said, that his reformation might be lasting, but it was too sudden to convince her of its reality. It was like camp-meeting conversions to religion, gotten up by excitement, and sure, in nine cases out of ten, to result in back-sliding.

Urged by Nellie to be cautious, Clarence promised to keep a watchful eye upon every action of Robert's and upon his former associates, so many of whom had shipped on board of the schooner.

While the crew were being enlisted, Mr. Everett was engaged in putting on board of the vessel all the provisions and stores which she could carry, and every kind of munition then known in warfare. He did not pause for an instant to consider expense; he only wished to have the *Cloud-rift* go to sea, as perfectly fitted out as means, liberality, and skill could make her.

On the fourth day from that on which he assumed command, Clarence Rhett announced to the old merchant his entire readiness for a cruise.

In some way, the English had apparently found out that a vessel was getting ready for a cruise; for during the last two days, three of their men-of-war, two frigates and a schooner,



had closely blockaded the harbor, laying off-and-on as close to the powerful shore batteries of the town, as they could without receiving damage.

"How will you get out with the brig?" asked Mr. Everett, when he and Clarence stood on the headland at the mouth of the harbor, and scanned the motions of the British cruisers outside.

"I must wait for a dark night and a fresh nor'-wester," said Clarence. "It would be folly to risk losing the brig in running that gauntlet without the advantages I have named. But give me darkness and the right wind, and I can dodge them, and I care not if they do see me. I know that I can show them my heels, if it is necessary. If I only had the schooner to deal with, I would give her all she asked for at close quarters, for I think, whatever faults they may have, that I have a crew who will fight, and fight well, too."

"I think there is no doubt of that," said Mr. Everett. "And we have only now to wait for the wind to suit, and a cloudy night, for you to get them where their courage can soon be proved."

"I think, from the weather signs, I shall not have long to wait," said Clarence. "It is wonderfully clear away to the northward and westward, and cool, too, for the season. If the wind chops around from the south-east, where it has hung for a week now, we will have it out fresh from the north-west, I am thinking. What do you say, Mr. Cromwell? You are better than a barometer, generally."

The last question was addressed by the young captain to the first mate, who had come down with him, at his request, to take a near look at the cruisers outside. The mate was in the full prime of life, apparently about forty years of age, a tall, raw-boned muscular man, with a frame that looked as if he had been especially built to meet and endure hard knocks.

His clear, blue eye, well-bronzed face, and sharp features were all "down-easterly," and indicative of the well-known character of the descendants from our Puritan forefathers, who have made New England, bleak and sterile as she is naturally, rich and fruitful beyond parallel.

"We're goin' to have a butt-ender from the nor'-west, cap'n, before two more suns rise and go down," said the mate, in a positive tone; "and, when it comes, them Britishers will be smarter than I think they are, if they can hug the mouth of this 'ere harbor. And I calc'late we can go out easy."

"I'm glad to hear you say so, for I felt sure that the weather signs were good for us," said Clarence. And now I reckon we may as well go back, for I want to exercise the crew at the guns an hour at least, and in making and taking in sail, as much more time, this afternoon."

"Don't tire them out with too much exercise at first," said Mr. Everett. "You may dishearten them before you get them where you'll need them most."

"To learn them their duty now, is only to fit them for work when it is really needed," said Clarence. "They must know how to work the brig's battery before I have to use it, and to make and take in sail in a hurry. They will not tire easily of such exercise, when they consider how necessary it is that they should be competent for duty."

"That's so—the more they work now, the less they'll have to do by-and-by," said the mate. "That's what I tell 'em."

"And they will soon see the benefit of it," said Clarence, as they started back towards the brig.

"What do you suppose has brought such a fleet so suddenly before our harbor?" asked Mr. Everett, addressing young Rhett.

"Some traitor in town has undoubtedly managed to send information out to the English fleet, that a privateer is nearly ready for sea. There are Tories now, I expect, even as there were in the time of the Revolution."

"Yes, sir—and I've been thinkin' since I saw how close they've been layin' in, where

they could see us so well through their glasses, that they might try an old trick on us—come in at night with their boats, and try to cut us off or burn us," said the mate, in a serious, thoughtful way.

"Mr. Cromwell—that is well thought of," said Clarence. "To-night we must have every man on board from sunset on, and a full watch, armed, kept on deck. Either you or I will keep with the watch."

"That's the way we always did when I was with old Admiral Clayton, in the Peru service," said Cromwell.

"Then you've seen war service in the regular navy? I never heard you speak about it before," said Clarence.

"No, sir, I never say much about it," said the mate. "It wasn't much, fightin' them cussed Spaniards. But they were amazin' sneakin' in their ways, and we had to be always on the look out in the dark for them; it was they'd catch us foul if they could."

"What are you thinking of, Mr. Everett?" asked Clarence, noticing that his patron seemed to be in a deep study over something.

"I was wondering who it could be among us, that could have informed the English of our matters here, and so put them on such a close watch over us. Since the fishing-smack *Two Brothers*, was captured, none of our fishermen have gone out. Our pilots all stay ashore—you know you had to pilot the *Hoogly* in yourself. There is but one person who ever runs beyond the light on the point, and that is 'Half-witted Joe,' who'd go out in his peria-gua to fish, if he knew he'd meet old Satan on the banks. But he never would think of giving information, even if he had the sense to do it. Poor Joe Bennett is as harmless as a deaf cat."

"Isn't he English by birth?" asked Cromwell.

"Yes, but he has been in this country since he was a boy. I asked him once who his father was, and he said King George. He is too idiotic to ever do any harm, or much good, even to himself, in this world."

"He is smart enough to be a pretty good pilot," said Clarence. "I remember some ten years ago, when we were in the Jamaica trade, in the brig *Eliza Brown*, we came too off the harbor one morning just at daylight, and waited for a pilot. It looked blowy away to the nor-west, and the captain was in a hurry to get in, before he lost the fair wind we yet had. Joe Bennett came alongside in his fishing-boat, and we asked him where all the pilots were. He said they had been to a dance all night, and they wouldn't wake up that day, he reckoned. But he could pilot the brig in, and would, for a gallon of cider."

"The captain asked him about our compass bearings, then, and the soundings, and the course in, and he answered as sensibly as any regular pilot could have done. We waited awhile, but our fair wind began to grow slack, and the clouds were rising fast in the nor-west, and the captain ran the risk, and let Joe pilot us in. He did it as well as any pilot could, and though we kept a leadsman on each side, throwing the lead every five minutes, he could tell us the soundings before they sung out. They may call him 'half-witted Joe,' but, I believe he has more wit in some things than those who sneer at him as a fool."

"He may be the man, and I will have a watch on his motions hereafter," said Mr. Everett. "We cannot be too careful who we have among us, when a powerful and malicious foe is off our coast."

"That is so," said Clarence. "But let me once get outside, and I'll draw them off, if bold and daring work can do it. The *Cloud-riht* shall win a name."

"Do not lose her by imprudence, or yourself either," said Mr. Everett. "It will be more profitable and less dangerous, if you give their men-of-war a wide berth, and look sharp after their merchantmen."

"True sir, but not quite so honorable," said Clarence, with a smile. "But I shall not look especially after their men-of-war, but if one

comes butt against me, she may find me a hard nut to crack, if my crew are as staunch as my hopes make me believe."

"Well, use your own judgement, my boy. Here we are close to the pretty craft. I'll go home to tea. Come up and breakfast with me in the morning."

"I will, sir, if nothing happens in the shape of duty to prevent it."

And while Mr. Everett went on up the street, Clarence Rhett and his trusty first mate went on board the brig.

## CHAPTER VI.

It would have been well for Mr. Everett, and others also in Salem, if they had sooner felt suspicious of treason in their midst, and kept a watch upon the singular being who was spoken of in our last chapter as "Half-witted Joe."

For at the very time when Mr. Everett was speaking of him, he was on board of the English Frigate, *Shannon*, which, commanded by Captain Brooks, lay the outermost of the British blockading vessels; and was giving for an idiot, as he was supposed to be, a very lucid account of the state of affairs in Salem and Boston, which latter place he had visited a day or two before.

He looked like an idiot at a first glance, for his large grey eyes were cold and lustreless—his sharp, thin face was pale and of a yellowish cast, not extraordinarily clean, either. His thin, scattering beard was snarled and dirty, and so was the matted, yellowish hair on his head. His garments were old and ragged, and he looked altogether like one of those wandering vagabonds, whom you may often meet, hat in hand, soliciting charity in or about large cities.

"When will this frigate, that you talk about, be ready for sea?" asked Captain Brooks of Joe Bennett as he stood before him in his cabin.

"The frigate is ready now," replied Joe, but her crew arn't. They want pay and prize money to go on a spree with, and they can't get it. I heard some of 'em growlin' about it when I was down to Boston, in a bar-room in Congress street."

"Who is her captain? Did you hear his name?" asked the English officer.

"Yes, sir, he is a new man to the ship and the crew too. His name is Lawrence."

"Lawrence?" said Captain Brook, thoughtfully. "Not him who had the *Hornet*, and sunk his Majesty's sloop-of-war *Peacock*?"

"Yes, sir; he's the man. I heard the Yankees braggin' about that very thing."

"Then, when his frigate comes out, they, or I, will have something more to brag about," said Captain Brook. "He is a brave enemy, and one there will be credit in meeting, and honor in defeating. If you can find out when he will come to sea, my man, I will double—yes, treble the number of golden guineas you have now in your pocket. Will you do it?"

"Yes, sir. Old Joe don't know much, the Yankees thinks, but he knows enough to love the chink of gold."

"Well my man, be faithful to me, and you shall have plenty of it. And now about this privateer brig. She will never come out while we lay here at the mouth of the harbor, that is a sure thing. And if we go away and let her get out, if she is as fast as you think she will be, none of us can catch her, and she will do immense damage before her career is checked. Could you pilot boats up to the privateer past the batteries?"

"Yes, sir, in a dark night, if they made no noise. But they keep a close watch down at the batteries, and the channel runs close under the guns."

"I care not for that if there is a chance to pass them. Will you undertake to lead in a column of boats, if I go in to take or destroy the new brig?"

"Yes, sir, for more guineas. If I get you in, I want a big bag full—full! for old Joe likes to hear 'em jingle."

"You shall have them, my man, if you get



us in. Once in, I will get out, if I have to land my men, and storm the batteries to do it."

"Will you try? There is no moon until after twelve to-night."

"And the tide runs flood till eleven. You can drift in and make no noise," said Joe, after a thoughtful pause of a few moments. "Yes, sir, for a bag of guineas I will try."

"Very well, I will make a signal to the other vessels, telling them what preparations to make, and when to be ready. Then I and the *Tenedos* will stand out to sea, to lull all suspicions, and not to come in until dark. You will stay on board this ship, and we will keep your boat in tow."

"I'm contented, sir, as long as the guineas keep coming. I'll be richer yet than them that call me a fool, and make a mockery of me. I've borne it for years, but some of 'em will be sorry for it yet, when they find that old Joe knows enough to ruin 'em. I can catch eels and porgies, and I can catch Yankees, too, if I am a fool, and go ragged and dirty. They laugh when I tell 'em I'm a son of King George; but they'll cry when they find out it's true. That's what they will."

"Well, well, my man. Go with my steward now. He will give you some grog and something to eat, and I will have the signals made."

Half-witted Joe now left the cabin with the steward, and Captain Brooks sent for his supper.

An hour or so afterwards, both of the frigates stood out to sea, but the schooner remained off the mouth of the harbor.

## CHAPTER VII.

At sunset, Clarence Rhett and his first mate stood upon the fore-castle of the *Cloud-rift*, watching the two English frigates, as they stood out to sea under a full press of canvas, leaving only the schooner to guard the mouth of the harbor.

"What do you think of it?" asked the young captain of his mate. "Do you think they have got tired watching us, and consider the schooner strong enough to do it alone?"

"Hardly that, sir," said Cromwell. "Them frigates are mighty lofty, you know, and their look-outs may have sighted some sail in the offing, which we can't see from here; and if so, they have gone out to see what they are."

"Possibly. They are crowding sail, as if they were in a hurry. But they may have run out to decoy us into a scrape. They may think that we will try to run by the schooner, or even that we might engage her, and just stand out till darkness concealed their motions, and come back to help her, if we were to try to go out in spite of her. These men-of-war's men are tricky customers."

"That's so, sir, and if I may be so bold as to offer my advice, I'd lay quiet here, if I was you, until the coast is fairly clear of 'em, if it takes a week or two. For every day we spend in drilling our own crew, and in getting the new hands used to the ropes, adds to our strength. I'd rather have a crew of thirty men that know their duty, than one or two hundred that didn't."

"You are right, Mr. Cromwell, and I shall stay in port, and exercise the men until I can get outside without danger. Once on blue water, we will run our chances with the best of them. Where we are too weak to fight, we will be fleet enough to run."

"Yes, sir, if the craft does as well as she looks. But it's time we hauled down our colors, and set the first watch. I see the last of the sun just giving a touch of gold to that steeple over there."

"Yes, it is near sunset. You may take the first watch to-night, and call me at midnight," said Rhett.

"Very well, sir, and to give him an idea of his duty, and to talk him into an idea of the value of discipline, I'll ask Robert to stand watch with me," said Cromwell.

"Yes, tell him it is my order that he does

so," said the captain, turning to go into the cabin.

As he did so, he met Mr. Everett, the elder, face to face, for the old merchant had just came on board, and had come forward to meet the young commander.

"There goes two of the bull dogs from their guard post, sir," said Clarence, as he pointed to the fast receding frigates. "Mr. Cromwell and myself here have been trying to think what they are leaving for; whether they want to decoy us out, or are really going off in earnest."

"I'm afraid there's a trick in it," said Mr. Everett. "Since I left you I have been making diligent inquiries after half-witted Joe. I find that he went out of the harbor early this morning, and a boy, who came up from the lighthouse, says, he saw a periagua boat, like his, run alongside of the man-of-war schooner a little after sunrise, and after staying there a little while, make sail, and run down to one of the frigates. And he did not see her again. I'm afraid that, 'half-witted,' as they call him, he is smart enough to play the spy and traitor here. You know how often he goes to Boston, without any apparent business there. I came down to put you on your guard, and advise you to keep a close lookout. They might try to destroy the vessel, and thus prevent the damage she is sure to do, if she once gets out clear of them."

"Let them come," said Clarence, with a smile. "They shall find us with shotted guns, and arms in our hands."

"That is right. I know that you will take care of your craft, if you are only warned in time of an approaching danger. The night will be dark and boats might get up past the batteries, with muffled oars."

"If they come, a full watch will be on deck to repel them, and it will be but a few seconds after an alarm, before all hands will be awake and ready for action," said Clarence.

"All right, and to make sure, I will myself go down to the batteries and caution the guards to be vigilant," said Mr. Everett.

"I will do more, sir, I will put a boat on picket in mid channel, just this side of the batteries, as soon as it is dark enough for them to take position unseen by anyone. Caution the battery guard not to fire on my boat, which will be at her post exactly at eight o'clock."

"I will; and now be watchful. I may come on board again," replied Mr. Everett.

"All right, if hailed, give your name, and you will stand in no danger of an unpleasant salute from our watch."

## CHAPTER VIII.

When young Everett was told by Cromwell that Captain Rhett wished him to join him in the first watch, he cheerfully acquiesced, for it was a part of his present policy to obey every order, and conform to every rule of discipline, since he wished to make friends, and become as powerful as possible on board. One-half of the enlisted crew—the star-board watch—was mustered on deck and arms served out to every man. Each man had a cutlass, a pair of large pistols then in use on board of men-of-war; cumbrous articles, with flint locks, and carrying an ounce ball, but extremely efficient at close quarters, as a club after being discharged.

The night was clear but the moon was well along in its phase, and did not rise until nearly midnight. The stars shone out, however, upon the quiet town, and the harbor; but rippled with a gentle breeze, reflected millions of dancing lights from their glancing faces.

Having the mid-watch from twelve to four to keep, Clarence Rhett gave his orders and retired early to his cot which swung in the after cabin, and where he kept a hanging lamp burning all the time, so that the last glance of his eyes, before they closed in slumber, could rest upon the sweet face of his heart's angel.

"Do you think there is any danger, to make

it necessary to keep so many men up and awake, Mr. Cromwell?" asked young Everett, as he walked up and down the quarter-deck by the side of the first mate.

"There may be; but whether there is or not, there is nothing so good as to have the men learn their duty early," replied Cromwell. "When we are in other parts, English cruisers may try their favorite game of 'cutting out,' and we must always be ready for them. Many of our hands are entirely green, and we must break them in as soon as we can."

"That is so," said Everett. "I only asked for I thought our new captain seemed rather timid and nervous in putting on so large a watch while we are here moored to the pier."

"You don't know Captain Clarence Rhett as I do, sir, or you would never think of timidity or nervousness in him," said Cromwell, promptly. "Why, sir, when a gang of blood-thirsty pirates were thronging our decks at the *Hoogly*, and the best of us thought all was lost, he was as cool as if he was driving sheep, and there was a smile on his face while he was chopping them down, and taking a head at every clip. There is no such thing as fear in his composition."

"I am glad to hear you say so, sir," replied Everett. "With such a splendid vessel, well found in every way, a good crew and a brave captain, we can win a proud name on the sea."

"Aye, and lots of prize-money, too," said Cromwell, who had enough of the Yankee in him to keep a calculation of future profits in his mind. "And now we will take a walk forward, to see if the men are awake and on the look out. I hear some of the *Hoogly's* men spinning yarns and singing. That is all right on ordinary occasions, and at sea I like to hear it. But to-night we must have quiet, so that oars can be heard, if any are on the water."

The two mates started forward and had just gone abreast of the foremast, when a single musket shot, away down toward the mouth of the harbor, startled them. As they paused to listen, the first shot was followed by an irregular volley of musketry and then in a minute or less afterward, came the flash and the heavy boom of cannonry, from a shore battery.

"All hands on a deck!" shouted Cromwell. "Mr. Everett, call Captain Rhett, tell him that there is an alarm from our picket boat in the channel, in the batteries below. Then see that all the larboard watch are up."

"Aye, aye, sir," cried young Everett, and he hurried to obey orders, for cowardice was not one of the many faults, and he rejoiced in the prospect of action.

In less than three minutes, Clarence Rhett was on deck; and when he got there, he found the crew all at quarters, the guns ready for use, the matches alight, and the crew prepared for defence.

After the first volley of musketry, only a few scattering shots were heard, and then the cheering of men came distinctly over the water.

"The enemy are trying to pass our picket boat and the batteries, sir," said the mate. "And we'll soon know whether they've succeeded or not, for the tide is running in like a mill-race; and once past the batteries, boats would come up like a streak. There goes another salute from the batteries, and their shot fly well up this way. The boats must have passed them."

"Yes," said the young captain, drawing his sword, Mr. Everett's present, for the first time.

Stepping forward where all the crew could see him in the starlight, he said, in a firm, cheerful tone:

"Boys, it is likely we will have some lively work here in a few minutes. Remember that we are where our own townsmen will be witness to our deeds. Let the British learn that the crew of the gallant *Cloud-rift* know how to take care of her, and to punish those who interfere with her, in port or out of it."

A loud cheer broke from every lip, and Clarence Rhett felt that he could depend on his crew, new as they were to such duties as were now opening.



"Mr. Cromwell, take charge forward," he cried. "Depress the fore-castle gun for use at close quarters, and throw in a couple of cases more canister. Mr. Everett, you remain here on the quarter-deck, and look out for the after gun. I will take post amidship, where I can keep an eye fore and aft. Gather in the lar-board waist, all you small-arm-men, and look to the priming of your muskets. Pikemen and boarders, take post on the bows and quarters, and be wide-awake for orders. Every gunner to his station, and work sharp when the time comes."

These orders given in a cool and decided tone, told the crew that they had a man for a leader, even if he was young; and even the most timid of them felt reassured by the quiet and easy manner of the commander.

All was now still for a few moments, and the crew of the *Cloudrift* listened, almost breathlessly for the approach of the enemy.

They had not long to wait. In a few minutes, there was a dash of oars in the water heard very plainly, though the oars, muffled in the oarlocks, made no other noise.

At the same time, a dark mass in the channel could be seen coming up rapidly.

"A large column of boats," said Clarence Rhett, as he glanced over the side. "Ready with the guns, before they scatter to board. Depress well, and do not fire without orders."

Then siezing his trumpet, he placed it to his mouth and shouted:

"Boats ahoy! Who are you? Keep off, or I'll fire!"

"Fire and be d—d! We'll soon let you know who we are!" shouted a stern voice in reply.

"Let them have it!" shouted Clarence, and ere the words had fairly left his lips, his three eighteen pounders, loaded almost to the muzzle with grape and canister, belched forth their deadly contents.

"Ready, musket men! Fire low, and let them have it!" shouted Clarence, the moment the large guns had been discharged. "Boarders and pike-men stand to your post and let no Englishman touch our deck!"

The cannon and the boats were so close together, that the report of the first drowned the crashing sound of splintering planks in the second; and the muskets and pistols, following in a second after, killed all other sounds.

Anxiously Clarence Rhett looked out through the clouds of smoke, which belched forth from the side of his vessel, to see what damage he had already done, and whether the foe had got strength enough aft to try and carry him by boarding.

He had not long to wait. In two or three minutes some boats were seen close alongside, and with a faint cheer, mingled with the groans and yells of the wounded men, their crews madly strove to climb the bulwarks of the privateer. But they were met by pikes and cutlasses, and pistol balls, at every point, and in spite of the gallant acts of several officers, who strove hard to cut their way on board, they were repelled fore and aft. One or two indeed got to the deck of the *Cloudrift*, but they only got there to fall dead or helpless on the deck.

The action, wildly desperate, did not last fifteen minutes, and then the same stern voice which had answered the first hail, was heard shouting:

"It's no use—fall back, men! They're too many for us!"

A wild, glad cheer broke from the crew of the *Cloudrift*, when this cry was heard; and as the English boats backed away in the cloud of smoke which was lying dense over the harbor, the heavy guns and the musketry poured a parting remembrance among the defeated Englishmen.

Yells of pain and anger came back, telling that random shots had found soft spots in the "hearts of oak," and then cheer after cheer rose from the decks of the privateer, and from the crowd of citizens, who had gathered down upon the wharves to witness what they had hardly dreamed of—a sea fight at their very doors.

Clarence Rhett now ordered his own boats out, not so much to follow the enemy, as to pick up any of their boats which had been disabled by his heavy guns, and to aid the feebly-manned shore batteries, if the enemy in his chargin and desperation, should try to carry them.

He sent his first and second mates, with full crews and explicit orders, in these boats, remaining on board himself, lest the enemy, rallying, should try again to board him.

When the boats were off, he turned his attention to the few who were wounded of his own crew, and to the half-dozen Englishmen who had so desperately striven to reach his deck, and who had paid for their temerity with their lives. One of these, however, was yet alive, though badly wounded.

Of him, as soon as he had been cared for by the surgeon, Clarence sought to know what force had made the attempt upon him, and how they had got in past the batteries so well.

The man, who was a forward officer on board the frigate *Shannon* stated that the expedition consisted of ten boats, four from each of the frigates, and two from the schooner outside, led by Captain Brooks in person; and that they had been piloted in by a Salem fisherman, who had come out in a periagua. From the description it was immediately known that the traitor was "Half-witted Joe." Upon being asked if the frigates had gone to sea that afternoon, he said they had, but it was only a blind, for they had turned back the moment it was dark, and had anchored as close as they dared to come.

Mr. Everett was on board of the *Cloudrift* within a few minutes after the British had been so gallantly beaten off, and he grasped the hand of Captain Rhett with a vice-like pressure, as he said:

"Your brig is christened, my dear boy—nobly christened, and your crew tried and found good, before her cut-water has kissed the ocean spray. I congratulate you, for this is ominous of continued success."

"I hope so, sir—I hope so. Why, the whole town seems to know the news already. Hear the bells pealing."

"Yes, were ten such frigates as those below to land their crews now, you would find men to beat them back. A little good fortune makes brave men out of cowards. Do you think the English boats will get back by the batteries?"

"Yes, sir, most likely, for if you will look, you will see that it is clouding up. A nor'-west gale is close upon us, and not a star is in sight now. They will creep past the batteries if they can, for the wounded man says they were terribly cut up in my first fire. They would have carried us by mere strength of numbers, if it had not been for that. It is more than likely that full half their men are killed and disabled. We will soon hear from the batteries if they can be seen as they go out."

But nothing more was heard from the batteries. An hour later, Cromwell and young Everett returned with their boats, bringing two English boats in tow, which had been deserted by the English commander; the well men of their crews first taken out, but the dead and badly wounded left in them. Among the latter was "Half-witted Joe," the traitor and pilot. His left arm had been shattered, and he had a musket ball through his thigh.

But in spite of his agony, he clutched the bag of guineas which he had received from the English captain in his right hand, and swore bitterly at all who came near him, for he thought, of course, that they would rob him of the price of his treachery.

In reply to a question of Mr. Everett, as to what made him act so foully toward those among whom he had lived so long, he boldly avowed that he was an Englishman, and hated the Yankees, and had meant all the time to do them the first ill-turn he could. All that he was sorry for was, that the expedition had failed, for if it had succeeded, he was to have had another bag of guineas.

"What will you do with him?" asked Mr. Everett of Rhett.

"I would hang him if we were anywhere but in Salem," said the young captain. "As it is, I shall turn him over to the civil authorities here, and they may hang him, or let him rot in jail, I care not which. Luckily for us, we were prepared for an attack, or else his treachery would have cost us this vessel, and probably the lives of more than half the crew; for by the way they have acted to-night, I can see how long they would have resisted, even in a hopeless case. I am ready to go to sea now, for I have a crew that I know I can trust, and if it blows to-morrow, as present appearances indicate, it will not be many hours before we are tossing on the waters of the blue Atlantic."

"How did my son behave?" asked the old merchant, with a look of anxiety. "I hope he shows no signs of flinching in the face of the enemy."

"None, sir; he acted bravely. No one could do better. I watched him as closely as I could, while attending to others," replied Clarence. "If he only keeps on as he has begun, you will have reason to be proud of him before our first cruise is over."

"I rejoice to hear it," said Mr. Everett. "I told you that if you would take him in hand, you could do something with him. I hear now nothing but good accounts of him, on shore as well as here. If his information is certain, he may consider it a bright day when he came under your command. Continue to be firm with him, as well as kind, and he will yet be an honor to his name and race. And now, my dear friend, I must hurry back to the house, for my sweet Nellie will be almost dead with anxiety and suspense, until she knows that the enemy have been beaten off, and who are hurt, and who are safe."

And the old merchant again pressed the hand of Clarence warmly, spoke a kind word to his son, and then went on shore.

Clarence now had the crew mustered aft, and, in a few well chosen words, thanked them for their coolness and gallantry.

"You have made no prize-money to-night, my men," said he, "but you have saved your vessel, proved to your countrymen what you are made of, and taught the haughty Britain a hard lesson. This is our first action, but it will not be our last. Before twenty-four hours are over, I hope to have you at sea, and then you shall have a chance to strike for fortune, as well as fame. One watch will now go below, as the other will stay on deck."

## CHAPTER IX.

BEFORE day dawned, a furious gale was blowing from the north-west. Clarence Rhett was on deck, with his spy-glass in his hand, looking anxiously toward the mouth of the harbor, to see if his enemies were yet on the watch. The first glimpse of daylight, showed their black hulls at anchor as close as they could get, pitching and tossing heavily on the rough sea, but holding on with their ground tackle, evidently intending to ride the gale out there, if it was possible.

"What a bother it is, sir, there never was a better wind to get out of here with!" said Cromwell, coming on deck, and looking at the sight which his young commander was contemplating.

"It is, indeed, annoying," said Clarence. "I have been thinking how I could induce those gentlemen to try deeper water for a fishing ground. If they lay there until this blow is over, the Lord only knows how long we will be cooped up in here."

"They are closer in than they were yesterday," said Cromwell.

"Yes, and in short range of that long point, covered with pine," said Clarence. "If I could put a couple of heavy guns on wheels, and run them down there quietly under cover of the bushy trees, I think I could get a short



range, and give them notice to quit, which they couldn't avoid receiving. They are rolling so at anchor, that a return fire would be comparatively harmless."

"That is so, sir, and Mr. Everett has two long twenty-fours in his store yard, that would do the thing as nice as could be. Why not lash two stout drays together, and get these guns down there to make a battery? The British never can land in such a sea-way, to stop us, and we could get all fixed in three or four hours, to sink them where they lay, or make them be on their anchorage."

"That is so," said Clarence, brightening at the thought. "Have the men get breakfast at once, while I go up and look at the guns, and see what I can do. If we can drive them off, we will soon be where we will ask no odds of them."

And the young captain landed and hurried away, while the first mate had all hands called, and bade them breakfast as soon as they could, for there was more work ahead.

"May I ask what it is, sir?" said young Everett, in a low tone, as he stood by Cromwell's side on the quarter-deck.

"Yes, sir," to carry out a plan of the captain's, to put them bull-dogs out there on the run," said the mate. "He has gone ashore to get ready, for he wants to be at sea and at work. Our boys proved last night that they are made of good stuff, and he wants to give them plenty to do."

"I am glad of it," said the second mate, "I got a taste of service last night, and now I'd like to have as much as will keep us busy."

"No fear but we will, when we get outside," said Cromwell. "But we may as well get breakfast ourselves, Mr. Everett, for when the captain comes back we will have work to do, I expect."

The two mates now went below, leaving the deck in charge of the boatswain.

Clarence Rhett was not long absent from his vessel. He found the guns described by Cromwell, and at once engaged Mr. Everett's draymen to get teams and their heaviest drays together, for the purpose of transporting them to the place where he intended to plant his battery.

To conceal his plans from the curious, and to prevent an idle crowd from going to the place, he had a quantity of old sails collected to cover the drays and guns, and told the draymen to throw a quantity of old cordage over all, so as to deceive anyone who might notice the load.

When the guns were ready for removal, he returned to the *Cloud-rift* to select a good party of gunners, and men to carry ammunition for use in his battery. When all was ready, he left young Everett in charge on board, and took Cromwell with him, and his selected men.

As they were leaving the vessel, Mr. Everett the senior, went with them, having received a message sent to him by young Rhett.

"You wanted me," he said, "your note reached me while I was at breakfast."

"Yes, sir, I am going to exercise a party of my men at target practise," said Rhett. "I thought perhaps you would like to witness their skill."

"To be sure I would. But are you not going to use your own guns on board the vessel?" asked the old merchant.

"No, sir, not this time. I have borrowed a couple of your spare cannon back of the store, and they are already on their way to a very excellent spot to mount them. If you will go with us, we will show you a specimen of what sailors can do ashore."

"Very well, my friend, I am with you."

Clarence now led the way by one of the back streets, to the rear of the town, following the route by which he had already sent the guns.

Out of town, fortunately without attracting attention and drawing a crowd, they took a road which led down by a low range of sandy knolls to the viny grove, that formed so fine a cover for their operations. At the edge of this grove they overtook the draymen with the

cannon; and here the party made a halt, while Clarence and Cromwell, accompanied by Mr. Everett, went to look out the best spot for planting the battery.

An excellent position was soon found, on the very edge of a cliff which overhung the ocean, not a half-a-mile from where the British vessels lay rolling and tossing at their anchors. This cliff, cornered by a thicket of dwarfy cedars, formed a natural breast-work, and the surf rolling for miles above and below, against the rocky shore, would effectually prevent any landing, however much the enemy might desire it, for the purpose of silencing the battery.

Cromwell at once went back to bring up the guns and men, and soon all hands were hard at work, and silently, too, as possible, in getting the heavy pieces mounted on the temporary field-works.

The bushes completely concealed their movements from the enemy, and Clarence smiled as he saw the English officers, clustered aft in each of their vessels, looking up toward the town, and probably engaged in talking over the attack and repulse of the previous night.

After an hour of steady labor, the guns were got into position, and loaded with round shot, ready for use. Only a narrow fringe of bushes had been left standing between them and the edge of the cliff; and now Clarence caused enough of these to be cut away, to enable the gunners to take aim at the targets before them. The schooner was nearest, but she was the smallest mark; and the frigates were chosen for the first trial.

Clarence sighted one gun, and Cromwell the other, and when all was ready they both fired simultaneously. Clarence caught up his spy-glass as soon as he fired, to mark the effect of his shot.

"Did you hit your mark?" asked Mr. Everett.

"No, sir, but I have woke them up. My shot went just over the frigates, hull, and between her main and foremast. Cromwell has done better: he has cut away the sling of the foreyard of his frigate. Both vessels are in a state of alarm. Officers and men rushing to quarters, as if they didn't know what was coming next. Load the guns again men—load carefully. I am not going to waste ammunition, and shall fire slowly and surely."

The gunners obeyed the order, and in three or four minutes more, the guns were ready for another discharge. Profiting by the result of the first fire, and taking a more accurate aim, both Clarence and Cromwell this time threw their shot into the hulls of the Englishmen.

The latter had already manned their batteries, and now returned the fire with a broadside directed at the cliff; for they could not see the guns of the well masked shore battery, although the smoke very nearly revealed its position.

Not a shot from the English batteries reached the elevation, where the American guns were planted. Everyone of their missiles struck the water or the cliff below, and no damage was done on shore.

"Load quick, we have got their range now, and we'll sink them where they lay, if they are foolish enough to hold on!" cried Clarence, delighted with the effect of his last two shots.

The gunners worked with a will, but in silence, for all shouting was forbidden now, and soon again two more twenty-pound shot went crashing into the English hulls.

The frigates kept up a rapid but harmless fire; their crews exhibiting much confusion; evidently receiving much harm from the American battery.

Clarence and Cromwell still aimed their respective guns, keeping up their range splendidly, and in a few minutes one of the frigates lost her mizzen-mast. The schooner, which had fired three or four guns, was now seen to slip her anchor, and drift out toward the other vessels.

Clarence determined that she should not go off unnoticed, and calling to Cromwell to do the same, he took aim at her

Both again fired at once, and with such effect, that the main-mast of the schooner went by the board, close down by the deck, carrying the fore-top-mast with it, and making a wreck of everything aft.

"Let her have it again, cut away her foremast, if it is a possible thing," cried Clarence.

Both guns were ready in a short time again, and the white splinters flew from the black hull of the schooner after the second discharge.

Her foresail was now partially hoisted, to hasten her departure from such a dangerous post; but twice more was she struck before she rounded too, under the lee of the nearest frigate.

"Good! she has got her breakfast!" cried Mr. Everett, as he saw how prettily she had been driven off. Now give the big ones a bellyful.

Clarence needed no urging, and his men, finding that every shot from their guns told upon the British hulls, while none of the returns did any damage, worked with the fearlessness and energy which a sense of security is apt to give.

It soon became evident that the English were suffering severely. Their guns were worked badly, and their shots were few and far between. At last, before an hour had gone by, men were seen aloft, loosing sail, and in a very short time under all the canvas that they dared to set, all three of the men-of-war were scudding off to sea, with holes in their sails, as well as in their hulls, which told well for the "target-practice" of Clarence Rhett, and those who served under him.

A wild, glad cheer broke from the lips of Clarence Rhett and his command, when the English were seen to slip their anchors, and scud away from the coast.

"Now, our road to sea is clear," cried Clarence gleefully, as he turned to Everett, "and lest the bull-dogs should return again when the blow is over, I will leave this battery where it is, and if the townsmen will man and guard it, there will be little danger of any more men-of-war seeking an anchorage off the harbor."

"That is so," said Mr. Everett, "and I will see that this battery is made permanent, and a guard assigned to it. It shall be called Battery Rhett."

"Battery Persuasion, would be a better name, sir," said Rhett, laughing, "for it persuaded our English friends to leave in a hurry."

"Yes, and I suppose now you will be off too, since the offing is clear."

"I shall go out to-night, sir," replied Clarence. "They will leave too, most likely, as soon as they can, and keep close in with the coast while the gale blows, for the nearer they are in, the smoother the sea will be. But as soon as it is dark, I can shape my course for a range, in which their traders can be found."

"All right. You will have time to take one more dinner on shore with me, while my butcher and grocer provides a farewell treat for your crew, and I will see you set sail cheerfully. So far, the *Cloud-rift's* crew have proved worthy of the pretty craft they are to sail in."

Mr. Everett then walked back to the town with Clarence, while Cromwell and his gunners followed in the rear. They did not go back alone and unheralded; for long before the firing had ceased, all Salem was awakened to the fact, that a new battery was in play, and there were many there to witness the short, but decisive action, which we have pictured in the foregoing lines.

## CHAPTER X.

"Two victories, before the prow of your beautiful vessel had parted the dark waves of the azure ocean! Were I a man, I should be jealous of you, Clarence."

These words were addressed to the hero of this story, as he sat by the side of Nellie Everett, after taking dinner with her and her father, on the day when he had so successfully driven



the British fleet back to sea. Mr. Everett had left him to take his farewell of Nellie, while he went down to the vessel to see if his orders had been obeyed, in regard to furnishing all hands with a farewell repast on board the *Cloud-rift*.

"I am very thankful that you are not a man, my dear Nellie," said Clarence, pressing the small hand which he held to his lips. "And these victories, of which so much importance is now made, will be thrown in the clouds, I hope, by those which are to follow."

"I hope the same glorious success, accompanied with safety to you and your crew, will continue to be yours," said Nellie; "and now, Clarence, about the future. Tell me where you will go to, how I may write to you, or hear from you. It will be very hard for me to spend long weeks, perhaps months, with no news from you to cheer my anxious heart."

"You will hear more from me, far more often than I can hope to hear from you," said Clarence. "For I shall lose no opportunity to communicate to your father, the news of our cruise, and no package shall be sent to him, which shall not contain a note for you. But our course and our whereabouts, will be determined altogether by circumstances, at present unknown and impossible to foresee. I intend at first to take a short run to the northward and try to intercept some of the storeships bound into Canadian ports, and then shall square away for the West India Islands, running far enough out from the coast to clear their blockading squadrons off our large ports. If I take any prizes and send them in, they will bring letters to you and your father. If I meet any of our own men-of-war they, too, will be mail carriers for me. And in my letters I will tell you where to direct to me, if I can."

"Well, I must hope and be patient, I suppose," said Nellie, with a sigh.

Then, taking from her pocket a small package, sealed up neatly, she said:

"This little parcel is not to be opened by Captain Rhett until he is out of sight of land. Do you understand, sir?"

"Yes, dear Nellie, I am sailing under sealed orders, I suppose. I know there is something very precious in it; but as I have not a woman's curiosity, I can deposit it in my vest pocket quietly, until the time arrives to open it."

"A woman's curiosity, sir. Now I suppose you are severe upon our sex. I am sure I possess but little curiosity, since I actually went to sleep last night after I heard the firing down at the wharf, before I learned what it was all about."

"Your father tells a different tale, dear Nellie; but you know that woman's curiosity brought all the evil that ever fell to the lot of man upon us. If Eve had not been curious—"

"You men would have all been born fools!" said Nellie, interrupting him with a gay laugh. "It was Eve who had courage while poor cowardly Adam didn't know enough to dress himself. Never twit us with a crime in being curious, since our curiosity was the foundation of all the knowledge that you poor masculines ever inherited from father Adam."

"Well, Nellie, you are more logical than I, and I will not attempt to controvert your opinions."

"More theological you mean, Clarence," said Nellie, with a smile. "I shall study my Bible a good deal while you are gone. Especially the history of Jonah. Don't you think he had a gay time while he was on his whaling voyage?"

"Not having read his log-book of the cruise, I cannot say," said Clarence; "but I have got to be off, Nellie. It is nearly light, and the moment that the last of daylight leaves us, I must be off with the brig; for the nor-west gale must carry me clear of the coast. Once fairly outside I can choose my own company, I think; for the *Cloud-rift* will not find her match in speed is my opinion."

"I hope not. It is hard to say farewell,

Clarence, but it must be spoken," said Nellie, trying to speak with a firm tone.

But her voice trembled, and her eyes were liquid with a feeling too deep and too sad for utterance.

"We will soon meet again, and, when this war is over, I hope we will meet never more to part," said Clarence. "I know that your father likes and respects me, and the success which I hope for, and will deserve, will embolden me to ask from him this hand, worth more a million times than all the treasure he has amassed."

"You will not ask in vain when you come back, Clarence," she said, gently. "When he knows that all my heart is yours, and my happiness rests alone with you, he will deny us nothing."

There was a warm embrace, one fond, lingering pressure of their lips, and the lovers parted, to meet—when?

## CHAPTER XI.

THE black scud flew yet swiftly overhead before the wild north-west gale, when darkness closed in over the town of Salem. On board of the *Cloud-rift*, before dark, there had been no open preparation made for an early departure, though not one of her crew or officers were allowed to go on shore, for it was understood that she must be ready for sailing at any moment.

Mr. Everett had taken an affectionate farewell of Clarence Rhett, and his son, in the after cabin, just before dark.

"Robert," said he to the latter, "your good conduct for the past few days has given me warm hopes of your future. Continue to be a man, and all that fortune and the true affection of a father can do to advance your interests shall be done. Obey Captain Rhett implicitly, trust always to his judgment and you will please me, and advance your own welfare."

"I will, sir, I will," said Robert Everett, with a tone and look so earnest, that it would hardly seem that his heart was yet rotten with hypocrisy.

But it was just at night, Mr. Everett went on shore; and ten minutes after darkness had fairly set in, with not a light visible except those where the compasses rested, the shore-fasts were all cast off; and under her close reefed foresail and balance reefed mainsail, with the head of her fore-storm stay-sail run up, the *Cloud-rift* began to move down the harbor.

Both watchers were on deck, but strict silence was enjoined. Even the leadmen in the fore-channels taking the soundings, gave the depth of water in a tone only audible to men standing close by them, and passing the word aft to the commander, who, at the wheel, acted as pilot also; for there was hardly a port or inlet on the Atlantic coast, to which Clarence Rhett was a stranger.

As the *Cloud-rift* drew off from the shore, and began to feel the full force of the gale, her speed increased, until, when fairly outside of all the head lands and shoals, she rushed through and over the heavy seas like a mad monster of life, which spurred alike the winds and waters.

"She rides like a bird!" said Clarence, to Cromwell, the latter being on the lee side of the wheel helping him to steer.

"She does, indeed, sir. If we had daylight with us, she'd run the land out of sight, at this rate, in two hours. Do you think them Englishmen will lay off for us?"

"Yes, if they can. I shall haul off to the northward as soon as we reach twenty fathoms water, for I'm sure they're further off than that. If the frigate were out of the way, I wouldn't mind meeting the schooner at all. With her main mast gone, she is badly crippled, and we could lay her aboard without trouble."

"She'll keep with them, if she can," said Cromwell.

"Perhaps she will try to run up to St. Johns, or Halifax, to get a new mast in; though she

could hardly haul up close enough, under her forward sails, to lay a northerly course. After I get a good offing, I will heave-to till daylight, if the wind keeps up, for then, no matter what we see at daylight, we can run to it, or from it, as our interest bids us do."

"Twenty fathoms, sir!" said a messenger from the leadmen.

"Good! Mr. Cromwell, go forward and have the staysail hauled down. Then come aft, and take in the mainsail, and brace the fore-top sharp up. We will heave-to with our head to port. I can steer her alone, for she minds her helm, as a tender-mouthed horse obeys the rein."

The mate went forward, and carried out the different orders promptly; and in a little while, the *Cloud-rift*, under her close-reefed foresail, braced sharp up, and sheeled close aft, was laying as snug to the wind as possible, making scarcely any lee-way, and forging ahead just enough to keep her under steerage control.

One watch was now sent below to sleep, while the other remained on deck, ready for any duty required.

## CHAPTER XII.

As the first mate had the first watch on deck, the second mate, Robert Everett, was called to take charge at midnight. Until this time, Clarence Rhett had remained on deck, but now, after telling young Everett to keep a careful look-out for lights in all directions, also to watch the soundings carefully, and to call him if a light were seen, or shoal water found, he went below to take some sleep; for he had been awake all the night before, and found rest now quite necessary.

As Cromwell's watch came on again at four in the morning, he, of course, hurried down to his berth to get what sleep he could, while his watch was below.

While the captain and his first officer were below, young Everett had a chance to converse with his particular chums, Ottis, Bascomb, and Brattle. Neither of them were yet sufficiently skilled in seamanship, to take a trick at the wheel, trick at cards being their greatest forte; but Robert had managed to get them in his watch as "waisters," for they could pull and haul on sheets and braces as well as seamen; and they were handy when he moved forward on the quarter-deck, where he could converse with them without attracting any particular attention from others, for it might be supposed that they, being greenhorns, were receiving instructions in their duties, etc.

"Well, sir, we're off at last," said Ottis, approaching Everett, as the latter halted in his quarter-deck promenade, close by the starboard fire-rail.

"Yes—how do you boys stand it? Sea-sick any?" asked Everett.

"I'm not," said Otis. "But Bascomb has been contributing his supper to Neptune. Brattle and I have been out fishing too often not to have got over such weaknesses. How does temperance agree with you, sir?"

"First-rate, while I had the eyes of the old man on me ashore. It will do very well here, with a little help from a private flask once in a while. I'm devilish sorry my rank will keep us from having a game of cards now and then, but this won't last always. I've got a hard game to play, but I'll come out the winner in the end. You boys must play your parts well. Get every man you can on my side, and by and by we'll see whether Captain Clarence Rhett is the head pin or not."

"We'll do our part, never fear," replied young Otis. "Keep smooth with the captain, and make him think you are as good as if you belonged to the church, and get his eyes well closed. When he does get them open, it will be too late to do him any good. We've got more than half the crew our own sort now, and it's a pity if we can't work over full half the rest of 'em. What a sea rover this craft would be if she was independent, and had a captain who dared to make war on all the world. Wine



and women, gold and jewels—eh, my boy?"

"Yes—yes, but don't hint about that yet," said young Everett, hastily. "There are not many, even of our own set, bold enough to think of that yet. But let them get used to blood-shed, and we can easily work them over to thinking as you and I do."

"That is so—we can wait," said Otis.

"Light, ho!" sung out a look-out from forward.

"Where away?" asked Everett, hurrying forward to the side of the man who spoke, and whose station was at the weather-side of the fore-castle.

"Just a point or two to windward of the bow, sir—almost ahead when the brig comes up to the wind," said the man, who was one of the old seamen from the *Hoogly*.

"Yes, I see it now. Keep your eye on it, and see if we rise it any, while I send word to the captain," said the young mate; and going aft, he sent Otis to inform the captain of the discovery.

In a few minutes, Clarence was on deck with his night-glass in his hand. Going forward, he looked at the light long and earnestly. At times it could scarcely be seen, and then again it seemed to shine out quite distinctly.

"It is on a vessel," he said at last. It will be daylight in little more than an hour, and then we shall see what she is if she is none too like ourselves. If the light seems to leave us before then, we must make sail, and try to keep it in sight. I will remain on deck with you, Mr. Everett."

The young man bowed, and seemed pleased when the captain joined him in walking the quarter-deck; and when the latter entered into a friendly conversation, speaking about the vessel and the crew, and the cruise which had commenced he responded in the most open and cheerful way. This greatly pleased Clarence, for, until this time, he and the young man had been for years at open variance; Everett taking every chance to quarrel with him, when they met. He seemed, indeed, bent on a thorough reformation, for no one could be more deferential or respectful than he now was.

The time flew rapidly while they walked and talked, and as the light was yet in sight of the look-outs, there was no alteration made in the course of the vessel.

When the darkness of night began to change into the gray of the dawning day, Clarence Rhett left the quarter-deck and taking post forward, anxiously looked to see what the vessel which had shown the light, would turn out to be.

In a short time it was light enough for him to distinguish a vessel, not more than a mile off, on his weather bow, and in a few moments more, he plainly recognized her through his glass. It was the schooner, which had been at anchor off Salem harbor the day before, and which had lost her mainmast when under fire of his shore battery.

She was hove-to on the same tack as the *Cloud-rift*, under a close reefed fore-sail, and seemed to labor a good deal in the heavy sea that was running. A jury mainmast had been got up, much smaller than that which had been carried away, yet large enough to be of some use in making her steer easy, with a sailing breeze.

Stiff as the gale was, trusting in the craft beneath him, Clarence Rhett at once had his close reefed mainsail and fore staysail set, and, bringing the brig by the wind, hauled up in chase of the schooner, setting his flag as he did so.

The schooner evidently had not been aware of his vicinity during the night, and that she was now in no condition to escape, or avoid an encounter was apparent.

Her commander did not feel inclined, either, to endeavor to avoid one; for he at once hoisted his colors, and the sound of his drum beating to quarters could be distinctly heard on the brig.

All hands were called at once on board the latter, and she was speedily cleared for action.

Finding that, with his whole spars and snugly trimmed sails, he could haul up well to windward of the schooner, and choose his own position for attack, Rhett buffed up close to the wind, and soon had the schooner at fair gun-shot on his lee beam. She did not seem inclined to commence the fight, however, though she showed more guns than the brig, but they appeared to be of lighter calibre.

Rhett had sent look-outs to scan the horizon in every direction, to see if the frigates were in sight; but no sail was visible except the schooner. Finding that she was in no hurry to begin the strife, and yet made no attempt to get out of his way, Rhett, ordered his crew to get their breakfast before he closed.

An hour was thus spent, and then, all being ready, Rhett ordered the helm of the brig to be put up, and her sheets eased off a little, and he began edging down on the stranger. His gunners were all at their stations, the guns double shotted, and all ready for work; but the sea ran very high, making aim at a low range uncertain, so he determined to get into close quarters before he opened fire.

The crew of the privateer were all on deck and in high spirits, for their first successes had made them bold and confident.

The two vessels were now in a short half-mile of each other, and the brig, under the most canvas, was rapidly lessening the distance between them. Suddenly, there was a puff of smoke seen to belch from the weather side of the English vessel, and before the report of the gun came up, against the wind, to the ears of Clarence Rhett and his crew, a shot threw up the spray close aboard.

"If that is her game, give her the benefit of our iron!" cried Clarence to his gunners. "Fire as fast as you can get your guns to bear, but do not throw a shot away."

The order was obeyed by the veterans from the *Hoogly* who had been selected to man the guns of the brig, and a slow, but most accurate fire was opened. In a few minutes the brig answered with every gun that she could bring to bear, and the action became general. Rhett still kept his vessel headed well down toward the Englishman, drawing rather ahead all the time; and the latter, seeing that he intended so to head-reach as to be able to cross her bow and rake her, kept away before the wind. This made it necessary for Rhett to shorten sail, to keep from running by the schooner, and he speedily took in all his canvas but his foresail.

The vessels, keeping up a rapid and far from harmless fire, were now within hailing distance, but the deafening roar of the guns, and the crack of musketry were too loud for human voices to be heard while they continued.

So far, the casualties on board the *Cloud-rift* had been few, though her hull and spars had suffered some; and a few of her men had been wounded. Calm and quiet, with an eye to everything, young Rhett issued his orders, and proudly saw that his crew received and obeyed them as if they had been veterans instead of new hands at such work.

Matters could not long continue thus, without serious damage to one or the other; and it soon came to the Englishman, for his foremast, wounded by the battery on shore before, now received another shot, and came tumbling down with all its spars attached.

This left the schooner completely disabled, rolling helpless in the trough of the sea; and Rhett, taking advantage of her position, shot ahead, and bore away across her bow.

The Englishman knew but too well, that a raking broadside from the privateer would sweep his deck, already encumbered with dead and wounded, and he hauled down his colors before the privateer had opened her raking fire.

"What vessel is that?" asked Rhett, as he ran down across the schooner's bow, and then luffed up again close under her lee.

"She was His Majesty's schooner *Spitfire*," said the commanding officer, sullenly, "but she is now your prize. She will do you but little

good, however, for she is filling fast, and will sink in an hour or two."

This was evidently true, for the remainder of the British crew were at the pumps, and the clean water which belched out from her scupper holes, told that it was pouring in faster than they could pump it out.

The sea was rough indeed for boat service, but humanity demanded that aid should be rendered to get the British crew out of their sinking vessel, and nobly did the privateersmen go to work to do it, not heeding the risk, or the labor.

In less than an hour, all the living were safe on board the *Cloud-rift*; and soon after the schooner, dismantled and shot-riddled, went out of sight beneath the water.

"Honorable, but profitless," was the remark of Clarence Rhett, as he saw the schooner go down. "And now," he added to Cromwell, "my original plan must be altered. I had intended to run up into the Bay of Fundy, and look for some of the English troop and store-ships that are coming over. But we are crowded with prisoners, and the sooner we are rid of them the better. As soon as the gale lulls, I shall try to make port, either Salem, Boston, or New London, and turn in my prisoners for exchange."

"Yes, sir, they're nothing but a bother here; and we've got to keep a bright eye and a strict guard on them all the time, for they are as wary as we are, and might turn on us and try to take the brig," said Cromwell.

"Well, we will soon get rid of them, if nothing happens, for we have not got far off the coast yet. But we are out of sight of land, and I must go below a minute, to attend to something I had nearly forgotten."

And young Rhett hastened to his cabin, to examine the sealed package which had been given him by Nellie Everett.

When he opened it, he found an exquisitely painted miniature of herself, on ivory, enclosed in a gold locket. With it was a slip of paper, with only these words: "Take care of me and of yourself for me."

The young captain pressed the gift to his lips, and then placed it on his heart, suspending it from his neck by the chain to which it was attached.

When he returned on deck again, he had the brig hove around, with her head to the southward and westward, and under easy sail, stood in toward the land.

He questioned the late commander of the schooner as to the probable whereabouts of the frigates, and learned from him, that one, or both, of them intended to lay off the mouth of Boston Harbor, to wait for the frigate, which had been reported to them as being nearly ready for sea.

This decided Rhett to bear away for a more southern post, where he could get into land his prisoners with less difficulty and he hauled out more to the southward, making more sail, as the gale gradually lessened.

Like nor'westers generally, that blow had come butt-end first, for before night it had died away almost to a calm; but as no sails were in sight, this did not disturb young Rhett at all. He only had the more time to exercise his crew.

When the English officer, who had lost his schooner, learned that he had been defeated by a green crew, his mortification knew no bounds. He laid his misfortune entirely, however, to the damage which he had received from the shore battery on the day before; and it was true that the injury thus received had crippled him to a great extent; but when he saw the manner in which the crew of the *Cloud-rift* worked their guns and their vessel in exercise, he had to confess that "green" though they were, they were a dangerous enemy to encounter. His admiration of the brig and her sailing qualities could not be concealed, and he acknowledged that he knew of no vessel, of her size, afloat, which could match her in any way.



## CHAPTER XIII.

A DEAD calm followed the gale which had welcomed the *Cloud-rift* to her ocean home. For two days and nights the brig drifted lazily upon the slow-heaving sea, and, during all this time, not a single sail appeared in sight, but on the morning of the third day, a slight breeze was felt, and by the time that the moon observations were taken, the *Cloud-rift* had a five or six knot breeze, and was standing in toward the land, on a westerly course, with every stitch of canvas set which she could carry. She had drifted outside of soundings; but before midnight soundings were found with the deep lead, and Clarence shortened sail, so that he might not get into too shallow water before daylight.

Nothing had occurred, in all this time, worth noticing, since the sinking of the schooner. The usual routine of duty was performed, a strict guard kept over the prisoners, and discipline preserved to the letter.

Clarence was called according to his orders, at daylight on the fourth day, for he expected, from the depth of water, that land would be in sight when there would be light enough to see it by. He was not wrong, for the sun's first rays slanted westward upon the gray rocks of the Massachusetts coast.

The land was so distant, that well acquainted as he was with the coast-marks, Rhett could not at first say what particular place he was near; but he ordered all sail set, and stood in toward it, to find out his location and bearing.

The crew were turned up to breakfast at the usual hour, and then exercised at general quarters, at the guns and with small arms. The breeze was light from the southward and westward, and considerable time elapsed before the brig neared the land sufficiently for Clarence to recognize any known point. In truth he had taken his noon observation, when he made out two or three hilly islands near the mouth of Boston harbor, and, almost at the same time, a sail was reported to the windward.

Taking his glass he went aloft to examine the stranger, and found in a few moments that he could have seen her nearly as well from deck, for the scant sail she carried made her look to be farther off than she was.

He recognized her as one of the English frigates, which he had seen off Salem harbor but a few days before. Light as the wind was, she was under her three topsails only, evidently laying off the mouth of the harbor to intercept vessels going in, or coming out.

The English commander, who had lost his schooner, asked permission to look at the vessel through the glass, and Clarence handed it to him, asking if he knew what vessel that was.

"Yes, sir, I know her well and what she is there for," replied the Englishman, "it is His Majesty's frigate, the *Shannon*, 38 guns, Captain Brooks commanding. I heard him say but a few days ago that he would give ten years pay to meet Captain Lawrence in your frigate *Chesapeake*, which he heard was nearly ready to sail from Boston and that he meant to challenge him to come out and fight him. The man who piloted our boats in to attack your brig has been a spy upon the movements of the *Chesapeake*, and he reported, when we lay off Salem, that she would be ready for sea in three or four days."

"Good!" said Clarence, quietly. "Lawrence has already made his mark at sea, and he will be the last to shrink from action. He will give Captain Brooks all that he wants, and as it is frigate against frigate, I will let them have a clean field. I can run into Salem and land you and your men by night-time, and get to sea again before another day dawns."

And apparently quite unnoticed by the English frigate, though she was not over six or seven miles distant, Clarence squared the brig away to the northward and westward, heading for Salem harbor.

The coast was now quite plain on their larboard beam, and most of the crew recognized well-known headlands, as the brig slowly moved along before the light breeze.

"Are you going to return to port so soon, sir?" asked young Everett in a respectful tone of Clarence, as the latter approached him while on watch on the quarter deck.

"Yes, but only to land our prisoners," said the young captain. "I shall only remain long enough to deliver them over to responsible authority, to be sent down to Boston for exchange. I shall not allow the crew to leave the vessel at all, for I shall go to sea again to-night; but if you want to go up to see your father and sister for an hour or so, while we are landing the prisoners, you can do it."

"Thank you, sir; I should like very well to tell them what I think of the vessel and her captain, since I have seen them tested in action," said the young man.

"Speak of the crew—they deserve praise—but never mind alluding to me, Mr. Everett; your father knows I will do as well as I can, but I do not wish him to think me too competent. If I am not well supported by my officers and crew I can do but little, though so far they have sustained me nobly."

"We will continue to do so, sir," replied young Everett. "I am sorry to say that I used to be prejudiced against you, and often acted shamefully toward you; but I have long since seen my error in so thinking and acting, and will try while I serve under you to do my duty to you, and to atone for the past."

"Do not speak of the past—it is all forgotten," said Clarence, pleasantly, "we will be good friends hereafter, Mr. Everett, and I will do all I can to fit you for the command which your father says you shall have if you do well on this cruise. You are young, and have much to learn; but lessons in seamanship and navigation, as well as gunnery, come easy to a willing and active mind."

"I will learn as fast as I can, sir. You will find me attentive, I hope, and if I am slack in anything, I will bear reproof without a murmur, and strive to improve and profit by it."

"Very well, Mr. Everett. Reproof will never come from my lips without cause, and all that I say will be spoken in kindness. You can haul the brig up two more points to the westward, as soon as that point on the bow is abeam. Keep a man in the weather fore-rigging with the lead, and notice the surroundings. If we get inside of ten fathoms, call me instantly."

"Yes, sir."

And the second mate continued his walk along the quarter-deck, while Clarence Rhett went below to make out duplicate lists of his prisoners, and to prepare for their transfer.

## CHAPTER XIV.

THE headlands at the mouth of Salem harbor were visible long before night, but the breeze was so light, that the *Cloud-rift* approached the port very slowly.

Suddenly, while the sun was yet two or three hours high, the sound of a cannon came booming over the water from the southward.

Cromwell, who had the watch on deck now remarked to Captain Rhett, who was walking with him, that most likely the *Chesapeake* was coming out. Hardly had he spoken before another loud report was heard in the same direction.

"A challenge, and its acceptance, I'll be bound!" said Clarence, with a smile. "I hope Captain Lawrence will make as short and effective work, this time, as he did with the *Peacock*, when the *Hornet* was under his command. It took him but a short time to send her to the bottom."

The officers and crew of the *Cloud-rift* now listened anxiously for further sounds of the expected conflict, of which they could see nothing, for distance, as well as headlands, prevented them from having a view of the offing in front of Boston.

In a little while two more guns were heard, shortly after these were followed by rapid and heavy broadside firing. This was incessant for nearly half an hour, closing just as the sun was

going down; and then the dense cloud of smoke could be seen, rising skyward, away off to the southward.

Clarence did not know how the combat had resulted, but when he thought of the way the gallant Lawrence had fought the *Hornet*, and the manner in which the old *Constitution* had whipped the *Java*, he felt sure that victory had been with the flag which he loved and carried. Little did he think, that at that very hour, brave Lawrence was dying, leaving, as his heritage, the memorable words—"Don't give up the ship." Though he was not destined to know it then, such was the fact; and the *Chesapeake*, her deck covered with the dead and dying, was in the hands of the British foe.

It was one of the few, but far from bloodless triumphs of their navy during that war, in which they lost their prestige, and lessened the falsity of their boast that "Britannia rules the waves."

Night had already drawn its sable veil over land and sea, when the *Cloud-rift* ran in alongside of the same wharf to which she had been moored when Clarence Rhett took command of her. And yet it seemed as if all the town had turned out to welcome her back; for she had been recognized outside before dark, which was all the better, for her passage by the batteries was unobstructed.

The first person on board was Mr. Everett. He sprang on deck the moment the vessel touched the wharf.

"What has brought you back so quick, Clarence?" he asked. "Nothing the matter with the brig, I hope?"

"No, sir, nothing but good luck. We have sunk a British man-of-war schooner, heavier in metal and force than ourselves, and I have come back to put her officers and crew ashore. For I've neither room nor provisions to spare for strangers."

"Good, good, my boy, you get on gloriously. If Congress hears your deeds, and they shall, they'll commission you in the regular navy."

"I do not desire the berth, sir," said Clarence. Here I am independent, with no superior to order me to go or come, without consulting my own judgment. I can choose my own cruising grounds, and fight in my own fashion."

"Very well, my boy. Your fashion is a sorry sort of a one for the evening. And now tell me how I can aid you in the disposition of your prisoners, for I suppose you will want to get to sea again, before any blockaders can hunt you off from clear water."

"Yes, sir, I shall go to sea again before daylight. We must find room in the jail and guard-house for these men, until you can send down to the commanding officer at Boston, and get him to take them in charge."

"Well, I will go and see to getting ready for them. While I am doing so, run up to the house, and tell Nellie what I am about, and how lucky you have been. Did Robert behave well in the action?"

"Splendidly, sir. No one could do better."

"I am glad to hear it—glad to hear that dissipation has not ruined him. I knew you would make a man out of him, if there was anything left in him to work on."

The old merchant now hurried away, amidst the cheers of the citizens who had learned of the recent successful action of the brig, and Clarence, leaving directions with Cromwell to prepare the prisoners for immediate transfer, and to keep the crew on board, went on shore to take advantage of his brief leisure, and exchange a word with the fair creature whose likeness was worn next his heart.

He found her in the old-fashioned parlor of her father's house, her face flushed with pleasure and anxiety, for good news flies fast, and she had already heard what had caused the return of *Cloud-rift* to port. She had heard, too, that the vessel would return to sea immediately and her anxiety was caused by the fear that Clarence Rhett would not take time from his duty, to come and see her before she sailed.



She knew his step ere she saw his form, and while a flush of joy crimsoned her cheek, she sprung to meet him.

"I am glad you took time to come to see me, dear Clarence," she cried, as she advanced to receive his welcome embrace. "I was so afraid you would forget poor me in the excitement of your success and glory."

"Forget you, with this dear memento resting on my heart!" he said, as he took out her miniature, and showed it to her.

"So you have been out of sight of land?" she replied, with a glad smile.

"Yes, dear Nellie, and shall be again before daylight," he rejoined. "I cannot stay now—not even to sit down to tell you of what has occurred since we sailed, for I must go and see to the transfer of my prisoners. I merely came to press one fond kiss upon your lips, and tell you how I thanked you for this dear gift. I gave your brother permission to come ashore for an hour before we sailed, and he will tell you about our action, and all that. He is a brave fellow, and I like him well, now that he seems bent on reformation."

"I am glad to hear praise from your lips, captain," said the voice of Robert Everett himself, for the young man had come so noiselessly in upon the happy lovers, that they had not heard the sound of his footsteps. "I ran up to see sister, as you said I could, but I did not mean to come so suddenly upon you, or to interrupt your conversation."

"The surprise is a pleasure, dear brother," said Nellie, "and I rejoice to hear you spoken of so highly."

"You must tell your sister all the news, I can spare no more time from duty: and do not make your visit last over an hour, for we have got to beat out of the harbor, and I want to be clear of the land, before daylight," cried Clarence.

Then he pressed the hand of Nellie warmly, and turned away, for he did not like to make his parting more noticeable in the eyes of a brother, who until lately had been so seriously at enmity with him.

The moment that the young captain was gone, the manner of Robert Everett towards his sister changed.

"Nellie," he said in a low tone, "do you encourage that upstart in his familiarity? When I came to the door, his arm was around your waist—his lips were pressed to yours."

"I did not know, nor did he, that one whose praise has but just left his lips, was playing the spy at his heels," said Nellie, while a flush of anger darkened her pretty face.

"When the daughter of the richest man in Salem condescends to receive a beggar for a lover, it is time that her brother acted as a spy," replied Robert Everett, angrily.

"Clarence Rhett is not a beggar, sir—nor was he ever one," said Nellie, proudly, "and I will not listen to such words from your lips, while he is doing all he can to lift you from dishonor. You should be thankful that he permits you to have a chance to redeem yourself under his command. Go, Robert, and try to win the esteem of a man as much nobler by nature than you are, as the sun is brighter and more glorious than the dimmest star that floats in the sky."

"I will go, Nellie Everett, but not to win his esteem. Curse him! I have always hated him; but now, hate is no word for what I feel. You may think to become his bride, but before that day arrives, the sharks shall feed on his body, and the worms on yours. Neither he nor you shall inherit the wealth of my father. I have seen the game in time, and I will cut it off or lose my own life in the attempt. Beware of me, Nellie Everett—sister I will not call you—beware of me. As for your lover, he is a cold water man, and he shall have enough of it before you see him again."

As he hissed these words from between his livid lips, the young man turned, and left his sister standing where she was when Clarence Rhett had parted from her.

For a few moments, she stood there silent, pale at times, and then flushed, for

anger and surprise were struggling with a vague fear in her mind, that her brother, whose wickedness of heart she well knew, would perform some deed of infamous treachery, which would indeed crush the fond hopes of herself and Clarence Rhett.

"He must be warned, and learn that the reformation of my brother is only a sham—that he is yet a hypocrite and a villain," said Nellie, after a few moments spent in thought. "I will write to him, and send the letter on board by a servant, for it would not do for me to go myself."

And Nellie hastened to carry out her intention.

## CHAPTER XV.

THOUGH almost wild with anger at discovering what he had before suspected, and not really known, that an attachment existed between Nellie and Clarence Rhett, Robert Everett possessed sufficient prudence of character, not to act rashly. His first thought was to reveal the discovery to his father, thinking that the aristocratic pride of the old merchant, would cause him to revolt at the thought of a connection between his daughter and Rhett; but a second thought told him, that the young captain had lately grown so strong in the affections of his father, that it would be difficult and perhaps an impossible thing, to dislodge him there. So he cast aside the thought of informing his father of what he had seen and heard.

"I will carry out the plans which Otis, Bascomb, and Brattle propose," he muttered. "I will wait for a chance to put him out of the way if he does not soon fall in action, and get his friend Cromwell out of the way too, and then I will have the brig to myself. I hardly think I will do as they advise, however, in making a pirate of her; not at any rate, if privateering will pay. We can be almost as lawless as a privateer, as we could be as a pirate. We cannot, perhaps, be so indiscriminate, and indulge in as licentious a life as they wish for, but all that will come in good time. So I must yet pretend to like him, though I would gladly drink his hot heart's blood—must obey his orders, and keep up the idea that I am a reformed penitent. Ha, ha! It would make the Devil laugh to think of my reformation. I was foolish, though, to let her know how I felt, and to make those threats to her. My anger got the better of my prudence that time. She will warn him of my feelings, if she can. I must prevent that. No word from her must reach him before we sail. She will hardly dare to try to see him on board, herself. If she does, I must prevent it at all hazards. I will watch the house till my hour is up, and if she or a servant leaves it, I will know what to do."

With this intention, Robert Everett paused when at a short distance from the house, and stepping into the shadow of a large elm tree near the sidewalk, he stood and watched his father's door. He had stood in this position fifteen or twenty minutes, when he saw some person leave the house and come down the street in the direction of the place where he stood, which was on the street that led down to the wharf, where the brig was moored.

Standing silent and almost breathless, he watched this person as he passed him and recognized him to be one of the house servants, and saw also that he carried a note in his hand.

Following the man with a steady step, he managed to cross the street unseen, and to get ahead of him, the minute before he reached the brig. Facing him there, as if he had come from on board, he spoke to him by name in a friendly way, and asked him how they all were at home.

The man did not know that the young gentleman had just been at his father's house, and he replied respectfully that all were well there, and then asked for Captain Rhett.

"He is away just now, Oscar," said the

young hypocrite. "Do you wish to see him particularly?"

"Yes, sir, I have a note for him, which Miss Nellie said I was to give to him in his own hands."

"Oh, well, I can hand it to him. We are going to shove off with the brig in a few minutes, and he will come off in a boat. There is no knowing exactly when he will come, or where he can be found just now. I will see that he gets the note as soon as he comes on board."

"I suppose it is all right, sir; but Miss Nellie told me to be particular and hand it to him myself."

"Oh, yes, but you might miss seeing him after all. I will take the note, and will write my sister a line, telling her it is safe, and will be delivered. That will set you right with her. By the way, is the old Indian Queen tavern open yet?"

"Oh, yes, sir—they never shut up house till midnight."

"Then, take this silver dollar, Oscar, and spend it in good ale, or some old Jamaica, to our good luck, we've had rare good fortune already, but we hope for better; and when we come into port again, I may have some nice present for you."

Robert Everett well knew the weakness of the man he spoke to upon the one point which he touched; and as he stretched out his hand to take the silver dollar offered, he handed young Everett the note which had been entrusted to him.

"Wait here just a minute while I run down to my state-room to write the note to my sister, and then you can go to the tavern and enjoy yourself, for it will do just as well to hand her my letter in the morning as to-night," said Robert.

The man waited, and Everett soon returned with a sealed note, directed to his sister, which the servant took, and then hurried off to the tavern to spend his unexpended bounty: for gold or silver was not a plentiful article among serving-men in those days.

An exulting smile passed over the face of Robert Everett as the man hurried off.

"We will be at sea before my sister knows what has been become of the note," he said in a tone of sardonic glee. "And when Clarence Rhett gets her note, he will be smarter than I am. It was well that I intercepted it, or his eyes would have been opened, and my chances for action would have been few and far between. I hope he will be back soon to get underway, for I don't want to linger in these atters an hour longer. If he should by accident meet her again, my cake is all dough. If not, when she gets my note, she will know what her chances of ever seeing him are slim enough, for she knows what I am, when once the devil in me is aroused. The dollar I gave her messenger, will anchor him in the Indian Queen for the next two or three hours at least, if not for the night, for he loves to crook his elbow when he has the means to do it with. Ah, there comes the fellow, and my father is with him, and a guard too for the prisoners."

It was so. Clarence Rhett and Mr. Everett, followed by a company of armed men, were coming down the street.

"Ah—back so soon? You did not stay your hour out," said Clarence, pleasantly, to the second mate, as he saw him standing on the wharf.

"No, sir: I thought you might be in a hurry to get away, and I only staid a little while after you left," replied Everett.

"It is all right," said Clarence. "We will land our prisoners immediately, and then there will be nothing to detain us. I want to get to sea as soon as I can. There is bad news from Boston, if it is true. An express messenger says the *Chesapeake* has been captured by a British privateer. I must get out before another blockading fleet gets between me and the ocean."

The transfer of the prisoners to the sole charge of the guard on shore took but a very



short time; and when it was completed Clarence bade Mr. Everett and his other friends farewell, and at once made sail on the brig, and started again for blue water. At his request, there was no cheering on shore when his moorings were cast off, for he wished to get to sea as quietly as he could. He had sent a messenger down to prepare the guards at the batteries, so that they would not fire on him by mistake; and having the ebb tide with him, and a rather stronger breeze than that which was blowing when he came in, he hoped to get well off the coast before daylight.

## CHAPTER XVI.

"Has the *Cloud-rift* sailed, father?" asked Nellie Everett, when her father came into the house.

"Oh, yes, an hour or more ago, my child," said the old gentleman. "I had to see the prisoners taken to the jail and the town-hall after they were landed, and she got underway the moment they were ashore. She is outside, by this time, I expect, for the wind has hauled around more to the west, and she would not have to tack it more than once."

"Did you see our hired man, Oscar, down there before she sailed?" asked Nellie.

"No, I did not," replied her father. "What would he be doing there?"

"I sent him there, sir, with a note to Captain Rhett, and told him to give it to him, and to nobody else," replied Nellie.

"It is strange that I did not see him," said Mr. Everett. "Clarence told me that he had just come from you, when he joined me at the town house, and I was not away from his side a moment until the moorings were cast off from the brig."

"Did you see my brother?" asked Nellie.

"Yes, he was at the wharf when we got down there, and said he had just left you."

"He did not stay here two minutes," said Nellie. "He did not even sit down in the house, and he made such threats against Clarence Rhett, that I sent a note down to him to warn him to be on his guard against him."

"What! Robert made threats against Clarence? Why, Nellie, you must be crazy. Clarence says he acts splendidly on board the brig—is as respectful and obedient as any man in her. Strictly temperate too, and he has even left off swearing."

"Father, Robert is playing the hypocrite. He got angry with me, because he thought Clarence Rhett was too friendly with me, and he uttered dark and fearful threats against him. He used language which made me tremble and shudder."

"Surely he could not have meant it," said Mr. Everett. "He spoke in the most cordial terms to Clarence, when they met on the wharf. Clarence is so pleased with him, that he places every trust and confidence in him."

"I am afraid that trust will be his ruin, if he has not received my warnings," said Nellie. "I wish that man Oscar would come back, so that I could know what became of my note. I am afraid that Clarence Rhett has not received it, and that he never will get it. I cautioned Oscar particularly to give it to no one else."

"I will go and see if he has returned," said Mr. Everett. "I hope better things of Robert than you think, but I know how bad he has been, and it may be that he is playing the hypocrite. I hope Clarence has got your note, for it will do Robert no harm to be watched, and will be all the better for him, if scrutiny finds him all correct."

Mr. Everett was leaving the room when the man Oscar made his appearance at the door.

His flushed face and unsteady gait told plainly that he had been drinking.

"Where have you been, sir," asked Mr. Everett, sternly.

"On an errand for Miss Nellie, sir," replied the man, with a very thick-tongued utterance.

"She sent me down to the brig, sir, to take a letter to Captain Rhett, sir."

"Did you give it to him?"

"No, sir. I met Mr. Robert there, sir, and he told me it was no use to wait for Captain Rhett, sir—that there was no knowing when he'd be on board, and he said he'd take the note, and keep it safe, and give it to him himself. And then he gave me a dollar, sir, and told me to go to the Indian Queen, and drink his health; and I did so, sir. Here is a note he sent to Miss Nellie, sir."

Nellie took the note, and opened it. She turned pale as she read its contents, but she preserved a calm demeanor, and said to the servant:

"You did wrong in not giving the note to Captain Rhett, Oscar. But it cannot be helped now—you can go."

The servant turned and left the room, and then she handed the open note to her father.

He read its contents aloud. They were brief and bitter:

"Not smart enough, Nellie Everett, by a cursed sight, to beat me. Clarence Rhett will get your friendly warning if I choose. Put your mind at rest about him. You have seen him for the last time. He loves the ocean so well, that he shall sleep his last sleep in it before long. Put this under your pillow, and dream over it. From one who dares everything, and fears nothing."

"ROBERT EVERETT."

"The villain—the villain," muttered the old merchant, as he gazed at the handwriting, only too well known to him. "But he says all this to frighten you, Nellie. He will not dare to attempt to injure Clarence. He will be powerless to do it, for Clarence is supreme in command, and has a gallant crew at his back. They have proved that already."

"You forget, my father, that fully one half of his crew was enlisted by Robert, and the most of the men that he enlisted were his friends and associates when he was leading such a wild and reckless life, that only my tears and entreaties kept you from disowning him, and driving him from your house forever."

"That is so," said Mr. Everett, thoughtfully. "God help Clarence and preserve him from ill! If I only knew where to send to him, I would soon have him warned, and get Robert away from the vessel. But he is off on a cruise, and there is no knowing where he will first make a port. He said to me, to-night, that he should first take a run up the coast, as far north as Halifax, in hopes of cutting off some of the English transports, and then, either make a bold dash for the English channel, or else run down to the West Indies, to cut up their merchantmen there. We must pray for his safety and wait till we hear from him."

"If Robert did not mean something serious by his threats, he would not have intercepted my letter, and planned to make Oscar drink, so as to delay him in giving me this note until he had sailed," said Nellie. "I shall pray for the safety of Clarence; but my heart will be in constant dread till I hear from him, and know that he has been warned of his danger. Robert will play the hypocrite with him, disarming all suspicion in his mind, until he can complete his plans of treachery, and then I fear Clarence will be defenceless to oppose them. An open enemy is far less dangerous than one who lurks in ambush."

"I know it, my child; and I will dispatch letters to every port, into which I think Clarence may stand the least chance of entering."

"Thank you, dear father—you are very kind."

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE breeze freshened as the *Cloud-rift* drew out from the land, and when the day-god once more threw her crimson smile upon her white canvas, her prow was cleaving white water, and not even from aloft could the look-out's searching eye discover a vestige of the land she had so lately left.

It is pleasant to a true sailor, when, glancing over his vessel, he discovers in the deep azure

of the waves, so darkly, deeply, beautifully blue, that he is well out upon the ocean's breast, and beyond the reefs and shoals, which are but too well indicated by the green tint of the water ever seen on soundings; for he knows that danger lies in being too near the land, instead of far away from it.

So may one gaze in the deep azure of calm, confiding love and deem himself blessed, far from the quicksands of green jealousy, which wreck fond hopes, and rend hearts and hands, united by ties which nothing else could sever.

Oh, when I look back over my own life's stormy sea, how much it seems like the ocean on which I once made and found a happy, happy home. When sailing on over love's fathomless waters, my sky was clear, my joy too great for utterance.

But when the false compass threw me off my course, when adverse gales of fate drove me into shallow water, when reefs and rocks and shoals were all around, and the life-storm broke wild above and about me—then, how terribly and how desolately I tossed upon the mad waters! But what has all this to do with my story?

Nothing!

Clarence Rhett did not shape a course for his vessel, until she had got well off to the eastward, and the drifting seaweed, alongside, told him that he had reached the gulf-stream—that mysterious river of the ocean, which, without seeming source runs with ceaseless current along our coast, kissing its coral reefs in the south, but sheering off from its cold granite sides in the north, as if the ice stone was beyond its power to move or melt.

By noon he had gained the offing he wished, and then, with the wind still at the south-west, squared away to the northward, telling his officers that he meant to strike the route which English vessels would take in sailing for Saint Lawrence, for he had heard from some of his prisoners that a large fleet of store ships were known to be on their way from the old country to that point, with ammunition and prisoners for the English fleets and armies, as well as soldiers to recruit those armies.

And now that the schooner is on her course, we will introduce to our readers a character who has hitherto kept in the back-ground; he was quite busy, and very necessarily so, after the brig had been engaged with the English man-of-war schooner.

Doctor Joshua Fowler, the surgeon of the *Cloud-rift*, was the only disengaged physician who could be picked up in Salem to fill that post. He not only looked as if he had been "picked up," but badly put together, and worse handled, before he had been gathered.

He was very long, very lank, and angular all over, from his face down. His hands were long and bony; on his feet, No. 13 brogans were a tight fit; his cheek-bones stood out like a starred Narraganset; his nose came down in a pointed hook over his thin lips, and seemed to be looking angrily at the bony chin below, as if it would like to "pitch into it." His eyes were large, cold, and lusterless; his complexion of an ashy white; his mouth wide, and looking all the wider for the thinness of his lips. Dressed in a suit of rusty black, as solemn as the best ghost that ever fathered Hamlet, he looks scarcely like a thing of earth, and surely not one of heaven.

He did not associate much with anyone, and scarcely ever spoke unless he was spoken to; and then his answers were brief, as if it were a labor to open his wide mouth to use his tongue, unless you got him on a story of his medical experience and then he would talk.

Yet he had a good deal of skill in medicine and surgery, the result of very long study and patient experiment; for, born in a physician's house, where his mother had been taken to die, after receiving a fatal injury in the upsetting of a stage-coach, he had been adopted and brought up by the old and childless doctor in his own ways; but we are not going to give his history in these pages. We have introduced



ed him to the reader and that is sufficient for the present.

He was sitting in the cabin, looking silently at the steward, who aided by the cabin boy, was setting out the dinner-table, when Captain Rhett came below, after having given the course, which the brig was to take, to the officer in charge of the watch—his first mate.

"Well, doctor, we are now fairly off on our cruise," said Clarence, pleasantly, as he paused before the surgeon.

Doctor Fowler opened his cold gray eyes wider than usual, but made no reply.

"How are our wounded men getting along?" continued Clarence.

"First rate!" replied the doctor, in a tone as dry as dust, and almost as thick.

"None of them in any danger?"

"No."

"How soon will they all be fit for duty?"

"Two of 'em in three or four days. The other six in three weeks."

"I am glad to hear of it. I want every man to be fit for duty. We are bound for a latitude where we may meet some rough service, and where if I take prizes, I shall have to spare men to take them into port. It does not pay a privateersman to destroy everything that he captures."

The doctor made no reply to this, but he looked wistfully at a large joint of roast beef which the steward had just placed on the table as if he would like to be engaged in dissecting it, rather than in talking, even about professional matters; for like most lean men, Doctor Joshua's greatest delight was in filling up his skin with such edibles as he could get hold of.

"The general health of the men is good, is it not?"

"Yes; some of the green un's sea-sick. Get over that easy—pukin's good for 'em."

"You never were at sea before—why are you not sea-sick, doctor?"

"'Cause I know too much. Took a pound of epsom salts in four doses, as soon as I greed to come. Worked off all the bile like sweat in July. Makes me as hungry as a starved cat all the time."

And Doctor Joshua looked ravenously at the table, upon which the steward was now placing the vegetables.

"I am glad to see you have an appetite, doctor. It has a healthy look," said Clarence, with a smile.

"Yes, healthy, but it costs a heap to board an appetite like mine. I'm ashamed of myself, but I can't help it. I'd eat sole-leather, I believe."

"We'll always have something better than that," said Clarence pleasantly. "After I've taken a cruise to the North, I'll run down into the latitude of turtles, and you can enjoy turtle soup and a dozen different kinds of meat from the same shell."

"Anything does me, if it only fills up," said the doctor.

"Dinner is ready, gentlemen," said the steward.

"Very well," said the captain. "Call Mr. Everett, so that he can eat directly, and relieve Mr. Cromwell on deck. Save a warm dinner for Mr. Cromwell. And, doctor, we'll fall to, for there is not as much ceremony on ship-board as on shore."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THREE days light but steady southerly winds took the *Cloud-rift* well to the northward, and Clarence Rhett had a bright look-out kept from aloft and on deck, day and night, for strange sails. During this time, twice each day, the crew were thoroughly drilled at the guns, and in all points of offence and defence, and at each successive turn of exercise they showed marked improvement.

They had just been called to quarters on the morning of the fourth day out, when the look-out from the fore-top-gallant cross-trees sang out:

"Sail-ho!"

"Where away?" asked Captain Rhett, for he had taken charge aft, while Everett and Cromwell had gone to attend to their divisions.

"Dead ahead, sir—not one only, but ten or twelve all close together. I thought it was a pack of white clouds for a good while, but I can make out sails easy enough now."

"A fleet of transports under convoy, I expect," said Clarence. "If so, we must try to cut some of them off."

And, taking his glass with him, he sprung into the fore-rigging, and hurried aloft to a position where he could carefully examine the strangers.

He was aloft for a full half hour, and twice, from that position, had the course of the brig altered, and her sails trimmed to meet the alteration.

When he came down, he called both Cromwell and Everett to his side.

"I have been counting the odds threatening," he said, pointing in the direction of the strange sails. "I can count eleven sail in all—all square-rigged. They are English, without doubt. Two of them only, I think, are men-of-war. One is surely as large as a frigate, and she may be a three-decker. The other is a brig, I think. The frigate leads the van of the fleet, and the brig watches the rear. The other vessels are all clumsy in their movements, and are heavily loaded; I expect, with stores, that would be of immense value to our government just at this time. I have called you together, gentlemen, to reveal to you the plan that I have been forming, while aloft. You know that when I captured the schooner, I also got hold of her signal-book, and a list of the British cruisers on this coast. Among them is the brig *Boxer*, which answers to about our tonnage. I am going to disguise this vessel as much as I can, and hoist the English flag, and the *Boxer's* number. If I can manage to keep without quite closing with them before dark, I can easily cheat their cruiser then, by giving them information about the English fleet, and make them believe that we are the *Boxer*. Then we will be dull, indeed, if we can't pick off one, and perhaps even three or four of the transports, during the night. If we can't cut them off from the convoy, we can board them, silence and secure the crews, and scuttle them, thus injuring the enemy, and doing our own country a service, for which we will be well paid hereafter. What do you say to my plan?"

"It will work!" said Cromwell, quietly.

"Suppose they hail you, to ask what brig, and who her commander is?" suggested young Everett.

"I have his name on the list—Captain Blythe."

"Then, sir, I don't see why you cannot carry the game through," replied the second mate. "But how will you keep from closing with them too soon?"

"Very easily. We must put on a drag—get out a hawser, with an anchor and some spars attached to it, and thus deaden our headway, while we crowd on sail as if we were trying to close with them. We can thus keep out of hail till night comes on, and then cut away our drag and close when we want to."

"We can do it sir—we can do it," said Cromwell in an enthusiastic tone.

"Cap'n, are we going to have another skirmage?" asked Doctor Joshua, who had approached the trio, while they were speaking.

"Yes, doctor, I hope so," replied Rhett. "Do you like the prospect?"

"Well—yes. Only I wanted to know so as to sharpen up a bit, for some of my tools are as dull as all creation. They've been used for the last two or three generations, sartin. Old Doctor Cowslip—that was him that brought me up and larned me the trade, had 'em of his boss, who fit in the French and Injun war, and into the Revolution, tew; so they've seen work—all sorts of hewin', and hackin', and sawin', and probin'. I must rub the rust off on 'em and put on a fresh edge."

And the surgeon went below, but soon re-

turned on deck with an odd-looking box, which he deliberately opened on the quarter-deck, and taking from it the various instruments, he quietly commenced cleaning and sharpening them; a proceeding that produced a great merriment among the most of the crew, though some of them looked rather serious as they regarded the knives and saws.

"Some of ye may laugh kind o' awkward and crooked mouthed, when you feel 'em, instead of lookin' at 'em," growled Doctor Joshua, for he did not like to have fun made of the solemnity of his profession. "It ain't jest like pullin' a tooth to have a leg sawed off, or a broken arm splintered up, now I tell you."

And he went on sharpening and cleaning with a quiet earnestness, that rather cooled down the risibility of the merriest of them all.

The brig had all this time been closing pretty fast with the English fleet, and Clarence had the drag got ready to put on as soon as he got within long signal distance, for he knew that to awaken suspicion in the men-of-war would defeat his plan.

## CHAPTER XIX.

THE plan formed by Captain Rhett worked well. At sunset he was within about three miles of the English fleet of transports, and had exchanged signals with their men-of-war, which seemed so correct, that no suspicion of his real character had disturbed them, or their coming. He was ordered to close and communicate with the commander of the leading ship—a heavy frigate, as soon as convenient, for she had a mail for coast squadron, to which His Majesty's brig *Boxer* belonged.

This Rhett promised, by signals, to do as soon as he could, but that his brig had been out so long, her bottom had got foul and it had hurt her rate of sailing. This was necessary for to account for her dullness, for the *Boxer* was known to be one of the fastest brigs in His Majesty's service.

As night drew on, Rhett lessened the weight on his drag, spar by spar, and gradually gained on the Englishmen, until two bells—nine o'clock in the evening—he passed the man-of-war brig just to windward.

As he did so, the following conversation took place:

"Is Captain Blythe still aboard the *Boxer*?"

"Yes, I am here," replied Rhett. "Is that you, Captain Murray, on the *Africa*?"

By reference to his list Rhett had learned that the brig, signalled as the *Africa*, was commanded by the Right Honorable Captain Frank Murray.

"Yes," was the reply. "If the water is smoother in the morning, I'll come aboard, Blythe."

"Do, and dine with me. I've got some Yankee beef and mutton, and fresh codfish from the British."

"Good! This cursed fleet of transports sails so slow that we've been out till we're short of everything eatable."

"All right. I'll supply you after I've spoken to the admiral. It will take me half the night to catch him, I'm afraid."

"No, you slide along pretty smooth past us. You'll be up with him before midnight. Keep your eye on your lights, so as not to run afoul of any of these lubberly transports. They're a cursed sleepy set. We have to keep wide awake, to prevent them from straggling and dropping out of convoy. Are there any Yankee cruisers on the coast?"

"No, Captain Brooks, in the *Shannon*, took a frigate the other day off Boston, and I've heard of none since."

"Good for old Brooks. He'll get promoted."

"He deserves it," said Rhett. "Had a hard fight, they say."

The brigs were now too far apart for the conversation to be kept up, though speaking trumpets had been used by Rhett and the English officer.

Lessening yet more weight on his drag, Rhett continued on, speaking vessel after vessel,



learning their names and cargoes, and getting other information, which aided him in determining what vessel to cut off, after he had spoken the admiral; for things, thus far, had worked so well, that he was determined to get possession of the important mail-bag, if he could, as he supposed it contained orders to the British fleet blockading the American coast, which would be of greater use in the hands of our government, than in those of the British.

It was nearly midnight when he got within hail of His Majesty's frigate, *Hebrus*, and now the most dangerous part of his experiment was at hand.

"Boxer ahoy!" came the hail, in a clear, commanding tone, through a trumpet from the frigate's deck. "Come up under our lee, and shorten sail. We will send a boat on board with the mail and despatches, and receive any news that you have for us."

"Aye, aye, sir!" cried Rhett in reply, greatly relieved when he found that he was not ordered to send a boat from his vessel to the Englishman, for he dreaded meeting some one there, who knew Captain Blythe or the other officers of the *Boxer*, and who might detect the counterfeit he was playing."

He immediately ran his vessel under the lee-beam of the frigate, within a half cable's length, and then took in his top-gallant sail, gaff top-sail, flying jib, and brailed in his foresail. The frigate at the same time clewed up its course, and took in topgallant sail, thus lessening her headway, so that it was easy to lower a boat in the smooth sea, and send it on board.

It came in a little while with a young midshipman in charge, who presented the compliments of Admiral Hardy, and the mail for the coast squadron.

Rhett, who assumed to be Captain Blythe, received the mail, and then gave the young officer a brief account of the capture of the *Chesapeake* by the *Shannon*, and a few other news items of interest. He then sent the admiral a handsome present of fresh meat and vegetables, which, he said, he had taken from the Yankees in a foraging expedition.

The boat did not remain long, for the convoy closed up rapidly while the frigate and brig were under short canvas, and it was now necessary to make sail again to hold the lead.

After the boat had returned to the frigate, Rhett hailed to know if it was necessary that he should keep company any longer, or if he should stand off on his course to rejoin his squadron commander.

"Rejoin your squadron, and deliver your dispatches as soon as possible, sir," replied the admiral, in person. "I am obliged to you for the stores you sent. Nothing could be more acceptable just now."

"You are very welcome to them, sir," replied Rhett, and then he gave orders to put the helm of the brig down, and bring her upon the wind, while he again made sail.

Luffing short across the stern of the frigate, the brig was thrown so close up that her sails were shivering, and of course, she made no headway out of the line of convoy. And now Clarence Rhett communicated his plan for the work which he intended to do.

Two boarding parties of twenty men each, were selected by the first and second mates, who were to command them. They were armed with pistols and cutlasses, but the orders were strict, that no pistol should be fired if it could possibly be avoided, nor any loud alarm given if it could be helped.

Rhett had determined to lay two of the most valuable transports aboard, as if by accident, and to ship them clear of the convoy, extinguishing their lights the instant they were taken, and laying by until the fleet had run completely away from them. Every man was made to comprehend the necessity of silence and prudence, and the danger of discovery through any carelessness of theirs.

In a little while the vessels of the convoy came straggling along, and as there was not a light to be seen on board the *Cloud-rift*, it was

easy to so steer as to get alongside of an Englishman before she was discovered.

The first vessel with which she came in contact was a large bark, which Rhett had hailed as he first went along, learning that she was loaded with naval stores for the Halifax depot, and had as passengers several English army officers of high rank.

There was a very careless watch kept on board the transport, for they did not see the *Cloud-rift* until her hull grated against theirs. At that moment, Cromwell with his party sprung on board, and in less than two minutes every man on deck was secured, those below put under guard, and the bark, with her light extinguished, hauled upon a wind with a course that at once took her out of the sailing line.

The *Cloud-rift* parted company with her the moment she was secure, and being now to, with her foretopsail aback, she waited for the next vessel in line—a ship not a quarter of a mile in the rear.

The same skill was exhibited by Captain Rhett in getting his brig alongside of this vessel, and the boarders got possession of her without the loss of a man, or any general alarm being given.

Having now two prizes, more he dared not risk taking care of. Rhett luffed his brig out of the line of convoy and watched, with deep anxiety, the long line of passing lights; knowing well if the vessels that he had taken were missed, it would be difficult to get them out of reach of their armed protectors; but if they were not missed, and the fleet kept on with the wind then blowing, before daylight they would be out of sight of him altogether, as he had ordered Cromwell and Everett, both, to take in all sail, as soon as they got four or five miles to windward of the line of sailing kept by the convoy.

It was a bold act, but brilliantly successful. Clarence watched light after light pass him and vanish in the distance, until, at last, not a glimmer could be seen anywhere.

It seemed a long night, for he could know nothing of the whereabouts of his mates and their prizes until daylight; but his own craft laid to under only a single staysail; he kept her as nearly stationary as he could, until the wished-for dawn enabled him to look about him.

So well had he made his calculations, and so accurately had his directions been obeyed, that when morning dawned the two prizes, laying to with no canvas set, were not over a mile apart and not more than two miles from him. The English fleet had run entirely out of sight, not even a speck of canvas being visibly from aloft.

Had they yet been in sight, Clarence would not have dared to show canvas on his own spars, or on the prizes, for fear of their recapture, but as it was, he made sail on the *Cloud-rift*, and running within hail of each of his prizes, he ordered them to follow him under all the sail they could spread, while he bore away south, determining to get his prizes into New York, if he could by the Montauk and Long Island channel, for he had little hopes of any other port being left sufficiently unguarded for him to get into it.

The vessels were all obliged to steer the necessary course, and the *Cloud-rift* soon proved so much faster than the prizes, that nearly half the canvas which she had set had to be taken in.

Clarence cared little for this, if he could only avoid the English fleets off the coast, and he kept well out of soundings, to avoid them, determining not to run in until he had reached the attitude of Montauk Point.

The two prizes were kept all the time close under his guns, so that no chance of their recapture, by an up-rising of the prisoners, could occur; or if the attempt was made, he would be near enough to foil it.

During the first day, he communicated frequently with both Cromwell and Everett; telling them how to act, in case they should part company in any unexpected stress of weather.

When night came on, signal sights were hoisted to keep them close together. All went well for the first day and night, and a fine distance way run on a southerly course, toward their port of destination.

But toward the second night, the weather began to change and Clarence saw to his deep regret, that a heavy gale was evidently brewing. So far as his own vessel was concerned he cared but little for it, for he knew her to be staunch and well-bound, and in the best of trim. But the two transports were very deep in the water, and the prize crews which he had thrown on board, though enough to manage them and guard the prisoners in fair weather, would be altogether too few, he feared, for both duties in a storm.

As night drew on, the weather-signs grew worse and worse, and much as he hated to lose one of his prizes, he felt that, to save the other, he must do it. So, ordering both vessels to heave to, he took from the ship which young Everett had charge of, all her original crew and passengers, and sending the most of her crew to Cromwell; to aid him on board the bark, he kept Robert with him. He then caused the English ship to be scuttled, and when night closed, only the bark and the *Cloud-rift* were together, for the ship had sunk within an hour from the time her crew had left her.

Ordering all light spars sent down on both vessels, everything housed and made snug as could be, Rhett prepared for the storm which was evidently coming. The worst of it was, that it seemed to be brewing in the north-east, and if it came to easterly, he would have a lee-shore to clear off from, if it was of long continuance.

Just before it became dark, he ordered both vessels hove to under short sail, with their heads to the eastward, and with lights hoisted so as not to part company if it could be avoided. But Cromwell had orders, in case of separation, to make the nearest safe port, and to wait until the *Cloud-rift* could make that, or some other, where she could be heard from.

Old seamen can read the weather-signs too well to be deceived; and long before midnight the gale which Clarence Rhett had dreaded was upon him.

He had all snug, however, in his own craft, and he knew that nothing would be neglected on board the prize of which Cromwell was in charge. He kept the first watch himself, and when midnight arrived, and with it the time to change the watch, he had everything ready for young Everett, so that he and his watch had nothing to do but to keep a bright look-out, and wait for the gale to break. For when all is snug aboard a ship, and she hove to with plenty of sea-room, there is but little for her crew to do but to watch and wait, as Mr. Micawber was always doing, "for something to turn up."

Captain Rhett was quite weary at the end of his watch, and after turning over the charge of the deck to young Everett, he was ready for a sound slumber.

The second mate was well enough pleased to be delivered from the danger and responsibility of his late separate command, and as soon as Clarence Rhett went below, he called his familiar friends Brattle, Otis and Bascomb aft, and held a conference with them. He so managed that they should not be separated from him, for in them he had his chief aids and advisers in the plans of evil, which he contemplated.

"We're lucky to be back on board the brig, I'm thinking," said Bascomb, who had been detailed with Everett, while the latter had charge of the ship.

"Yes, indeed, to be short handed in an old merchantman, in such a gale, would be no pleasant thing," said Everett; "and I'm glad that cursed Cromwell is away from us. I hope he'll never outlive the gale, for I know he was a spy upon all I said or did. How many of the crew, now on board, could I count for my-



self, if I and that upstart, Rhett, got into a row?"

"Full two-thirds. The captain sent almost all of them *Hoogly* men with the first mate."

"Then, if he don't keep his upper lip buttoned, he may soon find what I am made of, and that there isn't quite so much milk and water in my nature, as he seems to think. I don't like these northern latitudes any too well, and would a great deal rather be down on the Spanish Main, where I could see a black-eyed *Senorita* once in awhile."

"So would I," said Otis, "and Bob, if you're as smart as I think you are, you'll soon get us there. But, Lord, how it blows."

"Yes," and we never had a better chance, if we had everything ready. Who is at the helm, I wonder? I must go and see; for if he is one of the right sort, we can let the brig fall off, so as to get headway enough to leave the bark far out of sight when morning breaks. Do you stay here, boys, while I go and see about it."

And the young reprobate went aft to see what man was at the wheel.

Unfortunately for his designs he found one of the old crew of the *Hoogly* there, a true and trusty man, who told him that Captain Rhett had given orders to the man he relieved, that none but the old hands were to be stationed at the wheel while the gale continued. Everett dared not risk tampering with him, and he had to tell his co-plotters in sin, that they must risk their chances yet awhile.

## CHAPTER XX.

WHEN Clarence Rhett came on deck, at four o'clock in the morning, to relieve the mid watch he found that the gale had increased to a fearful height during the last four hours. There was a heavy cross-sea on, which satisfied him that he was well off shore, where the gulf-current was felt by the wind. But there was nothing to cause alarm. The vessel rode the waves like a duck, nothing heavier than a mass of drenching spray coming on board once in a while: her spars and rigging all standing taut and firm as ever. Her guns had been well secured, and though rather heavy for upper-weight in such a gale, were not dangerous while no lashings parted.

When day threw light over the sea, Rhett looked anxiously to learn if the prize was yet in sight. He soon discovered her some two and a half or three miles to leeward of him. She did not appear to weather the gale, or ride the rough waves so well as the brig. She rolled heavily, and her drift was evidently more. But when he hoisted his flag at sun-rise, Cromwell saw it, and answered by the American flag on board the ship, and Rhett knew that all was easy as long as Cromwell kept that flag, Union up, at his peak.

North-east gales, as a general thing, are not very long winded. They generally blow themselves out in the course of twenty-four hours, and well it is for the poor mariners off our coast in the winter time, that it is so; for many of them have a tough time in keeping out of the icy breakers as it is, and scarcely ever does a north-easter come upon them, without some vessel getting ground up on the granite rock of the coast.

As the sun went up, the gale rather lessened than increased, and when noontide came, Clarence had an excellent observation, which gave him hints, that he was drifting out of the longitude of the gulf stream.

This enabled him to so maneuver the brig that she was again got within hailing distance of his prize, and he learned from Cromwell, that the bark had strained a good deal during the gale, and had leaked some, but he was abundantly able to keep her free. Rhett directed him, if possible, to keep him close aboard until the gale lulled, for he should run into New York, or some nearer port, as soon as he could. He had particularly examined His Majesty's mail, and found in it documents of great importance to our government.

The weather kept improving as the hours flew on, and before night both vessels were standing in towards the land, under short sail yet, but making good headway. Night fell before land was seen, but shortly after dark, soundings were got with the deep sea-lead, which told them that it was not far away.

Signaling to the prize to follow in his wake, Rhett still stood in, having soundings taken often, knowing from his noon latitude and subsequent course, just how far he could go with safety, before he sighted the land.

His anxiety kept him on deck in spite of his fatigue, regardless of whether it was his watch, or that of the second mate, which he was keeping. This made it impossible for Everett to hold his usual consultation with his treacherous friends, and he had to keep himself and the captain straight, while he had charge; and when his watch was over, and he went below, he had to be equally careful, for he did not know who might have keen eyes, or sharp hearing, among the cabin servants, and he did not wish to be caught foul.

Nothing of note occurred during the night, but the soundings gradually lessened, and with the light of another morning, lumpy headlands at the upper end of Long Island were in plain view; and something not quite so pleasant to see was, four sail of square-rigged vessels lying at anchor, right in the channel between Long Island and the Main, which, at a single glance, Clarence Rhett knew to be the men-of-war.

As the United States naval force was too weak to permit of its being sent to sea in squadrons, the young captain at once suspected the vessels to be English, and he was not long kept in any doubt about the matter. While he was yet four or five miles off, they all got under way, and, showing British ensigns, stood out to intercept him; and to chase, if he kept away.

He soon saw that they were too heavy in build and armament for him to meet, and his great anxiety was to save his prize from recapture. If that could not be done, he was determined to destroy her, and to save his men from on board of her, for he felt that he could not afford to lose such a man as Cromwell, or such sterling seamen as those whom he had taken from the *Hoogly*.

As soon, therefore, as he discovered the real character of the vessels inshore of him, he signalled to Cromwell to stand out to sea, under every inch of canvas that he could set, while prepared to cover his rear as well as he could, for he did not mean to lose his prize, if it was even possible to save her.

As he was to windward when he hauled off, he had the advantage of the Englishmen, whom he discovered to be all of larger size than his own vessel, two of them frigates, and the others sloops-of-war, and he hoped to keep it; but the wind died away very fast, and before noon, he was in almost a dead calm, the sea becoming more and more calm every hour.

This made his situation terribly critical, for if the calm continued, the enemy could send a large force to assault him in boats, and though he might beat them off from the brig, he feared the bark would not be able to withstand them, for the prize crew had so many prisoners to guard, that few men could be spared for other purposes.

He had shown English colors as soon as he saw the other ships, but his actions, in keeping off shore, told them but too plainly his real character, and they used every exertion to close with him. When the sea became smooth enough, boats were got out ahead of the nearest frigate to tow her within gun shot of him, and these were reinforced from the other vessels, until a long line of them were engaged in bringing the frigate up.

Clarence, still keeping astern of his prize, sent every boat that he could spare to tow her off shore, while in person he trained his after gun on the British boats, intending to use it the moment his shot would reach them. He knew he must cripple them before the frigate could bring her heavy weight of metal to bear

on him, or he was lost; for she would so cripple him in spars, that he could not get away, and he would but fall too easy a prey to such large odds as their united force would be.

It was not long before the boats got within range, for the wind died entirely away, and throwing off all attempt at disguise, he hoisted the starry flag of his country, and threw a warning shot at the head of the long line of boats. The warning, in the shape of a round shot, troubled them a good deal, for it fell nearly abreast of the leading boat, and but little wide of it.

But they were not recalled, and still used every endeavor to get the frigate up, where she could throw her iron into the American brig.

A second shot with better aim, tore through one of the boats, giving the others plenty to do to pick up its crew, and threw the whole tow into confusion. The frigate now opened fire from a brow gun, but her shot fell short of the brig, and Clarence began to feel some hope of yet getting clear with his prize, when he saw how much his range was superior to that of the frigate.

All at once, signals were made by Cromwell from the bark that he had just discovered a square-rigged ship outside of him, which looked like a man-of-war. If this vessel turned out to be another Englishman, Clarence felt that it would be good fortune, indeed, if he was able to escape from her; and while thus perplexed by the new trouble, a look-out that he had sent aloft to reconnoiter the outside ship, reported three more vessels away to the northwest, pretty close to the land, apparently standing down toward him.

If he ever prayed for wind, he prayed for it then, for he saw himself nearly surrounded; but he still held his seaward course, and getting every man on board at the sweeps, endeavored to keep the brig as well as his prize out of range of the fleet astern. With his after gun, he now kept the boats of the enemy from towing, for he shattered two of them by a third lucky shot, and they saw it was worse than useless for them to come within his range.

The vessels last discovered seemed to close most rapidly of all, for they were apparently bringing a land breeze down with them. In the course of little more than an hour, Clarence could make out, through his spy-glass, that they were English—two of them frigates, and the third a three-decker.

He began now to despair of saving his prize, if he even saved his brig; and watched, with great anxiety, the appearance of the vessel to seaward of him; for if she also was English, he knew he must give up his prize, if he could, by any good luck, save himself; for he had found that, deep laden as she was, she was anything but speedy in her motions.

It was now getting well along in the day, and all the vessels were gradually closing, when, to his great joy, the outside vessel hoisted the flag of the United States, and Cromwell, who was once more within hail told him that he was sure she was the frigate *Constitution*, which had already made for herself a proud name in the war.

Clarence now felt more hope, and urging Cromwell to do his best with his boat and to wet down his canvas so as to make every sail tell, he kept his men at the sweeps on board the brig, and strove to get out of the range of his pursuers.

It was tedious and anxious work—wearing labor for officers and crew; but he cheered his men with the hope, that when darkness came, they might dodge their pursuers, and he caused them to exert every nerve.

So well did he maneuver, that, at sunset, he was in hail of the *Constitution*, and got from her an officer and part of a prize crew, to put on board of the bark, so that he could recall Cromwell and his best men to the brig. He also delivered the captured mail-bag to Captain Brainbridge of the American frigate, who told him to remain with the brig as near by him as



he could, for he meant to make a running fight with the English ships, and to cover the escape of the bark, if it was possible.

As all of the prisoners were now transferred to the frigate, and the brig clear of all supernumeraries, Captain Rhett felt as if he could do his share of fighting, especially with such a gallant consort in company.

When the sun went down, the nearest of the English ships were only just out of gun-shot, while all of them, seven in number, were not more than six or seven miles away; but the American vessels now held the wind of them, for a light breeze had sprung up from the east south-east, and setting every inch of canvas, with the bark in tow of the frigate, they were doing the best they could to keep clear of the too heavy force in their rear, or to so separate the British ships as to be able to cripple in detail, if not to capture any of them.

With the easterly wind came quite a body of clouds, and Captain Brainbridge, hauling up as sharp on the wind as he could, it being his best point of sailing, directed Captain Rhett to do the same thing, and it would be more than likely that the enemy would be hulled down by morning, if not out of sight, should the wind continue.

In case they parted company, they were to try to make the port of Boston, for the *Constitution* had just been chased from the front of Sandy Hook by a far superior fleet.

Captain Rhett, before they parted, however, told Captain Brainbridge, that if the bark could be got in without him, he would, in case of separation, and finding himself alone in the morning, bear away to the southward for a cruising-ground more likely to be profitable to a privateer than the one he had so far been sailing on.

Before midnight the *Cloud-rift* was out of sight and hearing of the frigate, and not a sight of the English had troubled them since dark.

After a consultation with Cromwell, whose experience and natural sagacity were such as to be most valuable to him, Clarence concluded to have his vessel on the other track, and to steer away to the southward and eastward. Therefore, first at midnight the brig was hove about, and still close-hauled, with her larboard, and every bit of canvas set which would draw, she stood off on her new course.

Clarence did not leave the deck, though Cromwell went below, when Everett's watch commenced, for the young commander knew that he was not clear of danger with no barge or fleet in pursuit, it may be more than likely they would scatter when they could no longer see him, so as to be more sure of having him in sight when day broke again.

As usual when on deck in his watch, he walked and conversed with young Everett, endeavoring to make his conversation as instructive as to his duties, as well as cheerful and pleasant.

"If the bark only gets in, your father will soon hear from us," said Clarence. "I wrote a hasty note to him, and sent it on board by the last boat that went."

"Did you tell him which way we would probably go now?" asked the young mate.

"Yes, I told him that I should try to cut into the West India trade, and to stay there as long as I could with profit and safety, and then, if my provisions lasted, I would run over into the British channel, where a vessel of our class would never be suspected, and then return by the northern route. A long cruise, but one which we can make if we are fortunate."

"Yes, sir," said Everett: "and it seems as if Fortune was smiling on us, for at one time to-day it looked terribly dark. But the good luck came with this breeze. I don't believe a cruiser will be in sight at daybreak."

"I hope not, if such cruisers are to be like those that pushed us so hard to-day," replied Clarence. "I will go below to look at my charts a little while," he added. "If a light should be seen, or anything strange occur, send for me instantly."

"I will, sir," replied Everett, as Clarence turned and left him.

When the second mate reached the forward end of the quarter-deck, he saw his trio of friends awaiting an interview.

"Do you think we're clear of the English man-of-war?" asked Otis.

"Yes, or will be before daylight. We are bound for the West Indies, boys, and when there, either the sharks, or the yellow fever has got to take care of Captain Rhett, and his sense-keeper, Cromwell, or there is no hope for me; and where I've no hope, you stand a poor chance, I reckon," said Bascomb. "Whatever you want done by us, Bob, you know we'll do."

"I hope you will. One thing must be done. That Cromwell must be got out of the way. He hates me, that I can see, and he has suspicion, I'm afraid, which will, perhaps put Rhett on the watch. As it is now, I've got him all right—but the Lord only knows how long he'll stay so. I wish they were both overboard. If they were, I'd show you the jolliest times you ever dreamed of."

"Let another such a gale come, and they may get a sly push," said Brattle. "In the dark it doesn't take a very heavy lift to send a man over to leeward, when the vessel is rolling bulwark under."

"Hush—go forward—he is coming on deck again," cried the young mate.

## CHAPTER XXI.

THE *Cloud-rift* had been absent from Salem just two weeks, when Mr. Everett who had gone down to his office, as usual, right away after breakfast, returned to the house, and sent up to her room for his daughter.

"You have good news for me, father!" she said the moment she looked at his smiling face.

"Yes, child—good news, indeed. I have just heard from the *Cloud-rift*. A prize from her has got safe into New London under convoy of the frigate *Constitution*. Clarence took two valuable prizes, but a blow came on, and he had to scuttle one, for he could not spare crew enough to guard his prisoners, and manage her. But the manifest and papers of the one he sunk prove her value, and Congress will pay us for her I know. The other prize is worth full half a million. And he rendered valuable service to the government in getting a mail from the enemy, with important dispatches."

"Is that all, dear father?" asked Nellie, with a quiet smile.

"Yes, is it not enough? or, woman-like, never satisfied, do you want something more?"

"Were your news bad, my father, very little would be more than enough; but of good news I am always greedy. Did you receive a direct report from Clarence?"

"Yes, a full statement. You shall read it by and by. Youngblood, my head clerk, is copying it into my letter-book now. But to keep you from suffering with anxiety while that is in use, here is a letter for your own important self, which may give you some light upon what he has been doing with the brig."

And the old merchant took a huge leather pocketbook from his coat pocket, and unrolling the long strap which secured it, took out a letter directed in a plain, bold hand, "Miss Nellie Everett, Salem, Mass."

"Why couldn't you have said you had a letter for me, without such a long rig-marole?" she asked with a pouting lip, as she snatched it from his hand, and broke the seal.

He smiled at her impatience, and quietly watched the change on her face as she read the document.

There were sundry changes from pale to red, and red to pale, while she read it; but at last she finished it, and a faint cry broke from her lips, as she closed and carefully refolded it. Observing that her father's eyes were upon her, she said with a saucy smile:

"You've been trying to read me, while I read

the letter, haven't you, father?—Have you made out anything new?"

"Not that I know of child," replied Mr. Everett. Does he speak of Robert in his letter?"

"Yes, sir; he says he is well, and doing well. That is all. And I know that Robert is playing the hypocrite, and studying mischief to him all the time—he must be warned, indeed, he must."

"He shall be, child, though I think he is too smart to be caught napping by such a numbscull as Robert is. He says he is going to run down into the vicinity of the West Indies, and will drop in once in a while at Havana, where our letters will be most likely to reach him."

"I wonder why he did not come in with his prize?"

"Because he was afraid of getting into port and being blockaded there. The day he wrote, he had been chased all day by a large English fleet, and only got away from them by disabling the boats which were towing a frigate toward him. He was being chased yet when he wrote, but he expected to dodge the enemy, as well as to part company with the *Constitution* and his prize, that night when darkness set in, and it appears that he did so. For he was not seen again after he had sent his letter on board the prize, and both she and the American frigate were in sight of the enemy next morning, and were chased clear into New London."

"What did he say about Robert in your letter, father?" asked Nellie.

"He said that he did his duty well, and was as efficient as he expected."

"Not one word about receiving my warning?"

"No."

"That proves, father, how dangerous Robert really is. Our man Oscar gave him the letter which I sent to Clarence. He has opened and read it, and, of course, withheld it. I fear, more than I can express, that he will try to carry out some dark design against Clarence. Only last night I had a fearful dream about him. I thought I saw him, and his hands were red with blood, while a look was on his face so wild and hateful, that it frightened me, and I woke up. You asked me why I was so pale and nervous at breakfast this morning. I did not tell you then, but that fearful dream was the cause."

"Poh, my child, you must not be terrified by dreams. Such a thing might pass in an ignorant old woman, who yet believes in witchcraft, reads her fortune in her tea cup, and all that; but you have been too well reared to heed such folly. I saw the cat up on my dressing stand, looking at herself in the mirror, this morning, but, for all that, I do not expect a stranger to dine with us. You are old enough to be a strong-minded woman, and not a dreamer."

"I try to be womanly, father. But I cannot help distrusting and fearing Robert, for I know his disposition so well, and know that his hypocrisy covers a nature as dark and cruel as it is cunning and treacherous. I shall write to Clarence again, and I hope you will, warning him to be constantly on his guard, and to trust no one."

"I will do it, Nellie. And now I must go back to the store. Have your letters for the *Cloud-rift* ready in a day or two, for we know not how soon we may have a chance to send to Havana. There is a vessel 'up' for that port, in Boston, now, I believe."

After these words, the old merchant kissed his daughter on the forehead, as he almost always did when he went out, and then returned to his store.

When she was alone, Nellie re-opened the letter which she had received from Clarence, and after pressing it to her red lips, perused it again and again.

"True, noble heart," she murmured. "I feel that a terrible peril is hanging over him, and I am powerless to avert it. Oh, if I had only wings, how quickly would I annihilate



space, and fly to his side, to be his guardian angel. Father says that a vessel in Boston harbor is bound to Havana. It puts a wild, wild thought in my head. God help me! I love my noble father dearly—so dearly! But I feel that I love Clarence Rhett even more dearly."

## CHAPTER XXII.

FROM the time that the *Cloud-rift* bore away to the southward, it seemed as if the storm-spirit, with which she had battled so often and so fiercely since her late ocean-christening, had determined to pursue her no longer. On the morning after the day when she had been so persistently chased by the English fleet, the sky was clear, and a fresh bearing breeze enabled her to lay her course. Only a single sail was in sight from aloft, and that was so far away astern, that not even its rig could be discerned by the look-out; and a half-hour after it was out of sight altogether.

"We will soon be in a warmer latitude, doctor," said Clarence Rhett to old Doctor Joshua, as they sat at the breakfast table that morning. "If this wind holds, I shall not stir either tuck, or sheet, or brace, till we are in the route of the British traders to the West Indies."

"Glad to hear it," said Doctor Joshua, speaking rather thickly, for he had just put the half of a potato in his mouth. "Have some yaller fever, I hope. Never seen much of it, and want to learn how it works. Got a good lot of mercury in my chist, and that's pison to it, so the books say."

Clarence smiled at the earnest manner in which the old doctor wished to have the yellow fever on board, for him to experiment with.

"I had rather keep a clean bill of health," said he to the doctor. "If we run into Havana, as we probably shall, you will have plenty of opportunity to study yellow fever in the hospitals there, without a necessity for having it nearer at hand. If we do get it on board, it cannot be helped, and we must do the best we can with it. But a clean ship on deck and below, and a regular diet will keep our men well, I hope."

"If they are all all the time, and don't get knocked to pieces in no fight, I shall not earn my salt," said the old doctor, with a sigh. "They don't even have the toothache, and I've oiled up my turn-keys a purpose for that. We've an alarmin' healthy set aboard here, sir, I shall get as rusty as an old saw, if somebody don't get sick. I don't see what keeps the men so well. Even the chaps that were seasick, have got over pukin', and my Nux Vomica bottle ain't of use no longer, it's terrible dull to have nothin' to do."

And the doctor dashed his knife into a large slice of cold boiled pork, as if a dissection of that would give him some comfort.

"You have been in Havana before, I believe, Mr. Everett," said Clarence, addressing the second mate, who was at the table.

"Yes, sir, three years ago, when father had the Schooner *Frankie* in the fruit trade, I took three voyages in her. It is a gay old place, but I don't understand Spanish well enough to get about on shore, to any extent; and then the Diegos have an awkward way of handling their knives, when strangers are around after dark, they say. Our captain wouldn't let one of the crew stay ashore in the night."

"If men keep sober and mind their own business, they are as safe in Havana as they are in Boston or New York," said Clarence, quietly. "I have been ashore there at all hours, and never saw a sign of danger."

"Has Mr. Cromwell ever been there?" asked young Everett.

"I think he has. I know he was wrecked once on the Florida Coast, opposite, for I have heard him speak of that. He and the survivors of the crew of the ship he was on suffered terribly of thirst and hunger on a small sandy island too far from the main to reach it by swimming, and they had neither boats, nor

materials for rafts. When they were rescued by some wreckers, they were robbed of all they had, for there was little difference, in those days, between a wrecker and a pirate; and I don't know as there is even now. It's a poor trade which thrives by the misfortunes of others."

"That's so, and docterin' is one of 'em," said Doctor Joshua in his solemn way. "A doctor don't have nothin' to do, without somebody has the misfortin' to get sick; and then if the feller that's sick has the fortin' to die, why it's all blamed to the doctor. If he gits well, then it's God's blessed providence. The doctor didn't have nothin' to do with it of course."

"You're severe on your own profession, doctor," said Clarence, laughing.

"No, cap'n, it's the world that's always severe on us. Now, preachers don't get treated so. When they go avisitin' chickens is killed, cakes and pies made, and they're stuffed till they can hardly pray. Look at their hosses. Always fat as hogs in acorn-time, while a doctor's hoss looks as if he was fed on empty barrels, and couldn't get rid of the hoops. Wimmen are always sweet on preachers, but they're as sour as green currants on doctors. I never knew but one woman on this side of yearth, that ever smiled on me. Her name was Hettabel Buskins, and she hated preachers awful. But she died—she was uncommon fond of pork and cabbage, and she ate too much of it one hot summer day, and topped off with green cowcubers and no salt. She took the cramps, and got all kinked up afore they sent for me. When I got there, she was well nigh gone, but she ripped out one back-handed blessin' agin' a preacher that wanted to tell her she was a sinner, and then she kicked the bucket. Afore she went, she whispered to me—'Josh, you dear old dog, just you see me put deep down in the ground, so that I can't hear 'em shoutin' canan over me.' I promised her, and she smiled, and went off as easy as two grains of opium would let her."

The doctor sighed as he said this, and helped himself to another large slice of pork, and a spoonful of mustard.

"Have you never been married, doctor?" asked Clarence, who, when he had leisure, liked to bring the doctor out in oddities.

"Me married, cap'n? No, sir. I've had a good many misfortin's in my lifetime, but never nothin' quite so bad as that. I've been upset in my gig, and had my ribs broke; and when I got a pretty fair start in the wuld, arter my old boss died and left me his tools, and med'cines, and books, I got burnt out, and didn't save nothin' but the tools, and I've got them yet. I've lost patient arter patient that ought to have lived, cause I doctored 'em just as the books told me to, and I've been sued twenty times, and been locked up once. But notwithstanding all these mishaps, I never had such wretched luck as to get married. Not that I haven't been tempted. A widder once made a dead set at me, but I knew what 'twas for. She had six little children, and scant feedin' and clothin' for 'em and she thought I'd do for them and her, too, if she got me. But I wasn't to be caught. No, sir, old Josh Fowler has seen too much of women and their ailins', to get fooled by 'em, I never knowed one yet that wasn't histericky. If they wasn't narvous, they'd have tempers that would shake the vanes of an elephant. No, sir, I never was married, nor never will be with my own free will and consent. Men that don't know how wimmen is made, and what their ailin's is, may get took in, but old Josh isn't one of them sort!"

And the doctor swallowed a cup of coffee, with a more pleasant face than he had before shown that morning.

By this time, Clarence and Everett had finished their meal, and as the latter had to relieve Cromwell in his watch above, they both went on deck.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

"LINDA! Linda! Carawba, but she is a beauty, that brigantina Americano!"

These words of admiration were uttered by one of three Spaniards, who stood upon the mole at Havana, as the *Cloud-rift*, under her topsail, mainsail and jib, came sweeping into the harbor, from a gale, which, to use an old phrase, was blowing "great guns" outside.

The speaker looked like a sea-going man. His dark complexion had a weather-bronzed appearance, and his dress was rather more nautical than civilian in its appearance. He was a middle-aged man, short and muscular in build, with a rough and reckless expression of face.

One of his companions was quite an elderly man, dressed in the most elegant and fashionable style, with a great display of jewelry on his person, such as diamond studs in his shirt bosom, rings on his fingers and a huge chain of gold across his vest, as a guard to his watch.

The other was quite young—a mere boy, one would say, at a first view of his lithe and slender form, and his smooth face. But a glance at the sternly contracted brow, the thin, firm lip, the cold and haughty expression of his face would satisfy a keen observer, that though young, perhaps, in years, he was possessed of a character, which even age does not always give to men.

"She is pretty, and looks as if she would outsail the wind," said the oldest of the three. "What do you think of her, Don Francisco?" he added, addressing the inquiry to the youngest of the party.

"I think she would suit our business to a miracle," replied the young man, keeping his eye upon her, as she slipped swiftly along up the harbor. "Aye, Senor De Leon, if she was mine, with a good crew to man and fight her, I'd shake my finger in scorn at the miserable men-of-war's-men, who think they can crush the Free Rovers of the Sea. What say you to it, Captain Martinez?"

And the young man now turned to the short-statured man, who had uttered the first exclamation.

"I think that if money can buy her, or, that failing, if cunning or force can get possession of her, our flag will float at her peak before two weeks have come and gone," replied Martinez. "I never have seen a vessel run at the rate of ten knots up this harbor under three sails before. She lays so low in the water that if her spars were scraped and her hull painted lead color, you couldn't see her five miles off at sea, with no canvas set. We must have her, for since the government have got the *Santa Isabella*, and the *Maraquita* on our cruising ground, we have nothing fast enough to keep out of their way. With her under our feet, we could fight, or run away just when we chose. What think you, Senor De Leon?"

"That I have two or three chests of doubloons to lend you, Captain Martinez, if you can buy her. If not, you have men who can use steel, where gold will not avail, and few men are your superiors in cunning—in courage, none."

"She shall be ours," said Martinez. "She is strong-handed too. See, all of her canvas comes in at once, and quickly too, as she rounds to at the anchorage yonder. There goes her anchor down, and the men are aloft furling sail already. They work well. The man who commands there knows what he is about. The cursed *Ingluterras* (Englishmen) will be thankful to us if we rid them of such an enemy. I will do it, but for no love of them. We need such a craft, and must have her."

"How will you go to work, captain?" asked the youngest man.

"I will get you help, Don Francisco," said Martinez. "You must put on your naval uniform, and visit her as soon as you can, offering her commander and officers our joint hospitalities. Senor De Leon will, I know, throw his princely palace open to them as guests, when, in the end, there will be a chance to get so rich a reward for the hospitality."



"To be sure I will," replied Senor De Leon. "Invite them one and all to my palace, and wine and beauty shall welcome them there. If it does not take their wits away, it shall be no fault of mine."

"Get the officers once on shore, and make yourself acquainted with the strength of the crew, and the manner of watch kept, and if we cannot buy, we can capture," said Martinez.

"Well, captain, ashore they shall come, if my smooth tongue can win them there," said Don Francisco, with a quiet smile.

"Your smooth tongue would win a priest from his beads, or a woman from her love," said Senor De Leon. "It is a pity you were not a woman, with your winning ways, Don Francisco."

"A woman, with a woman's heart, and a heart's weakness? I'd cut my throat if I was, for you know, senor, how I despise weakness in anything, human or animal. I'd kill my pet bloodhound, if I thought there was a drop of merciful blood in his veins."

And a look of almost fiendish bitterness made the face of the young man look Satanic, beautiful as it was in every feature.

"No one who has ever had dealings with Don Francisco when his claws are cut, will accuse him of any weakness at heart," said Captain Martinez. But he can be as pleasant as a tiger enjoying a *siesta*, when he chooses to keep his claws out of sight. And now, Don Francisco, when will you go on board of the stranger?"

"Right away, captain, as soon as I can go to my room, and put on my uniform. I shall make no delay, for I long to be on blue water, under the black flag, once more. I'm sick of playing the idler here, when there is so much to do afloat; and I'm sure you are, too, my brave captain."

"You are right, Don Francisco; and our men are getting uneasy, for steel hangs heavy in the scabbard, which is light to the hand," replied Martinez.

"Well, arrange matters to suit yourself, comrades. I will be at the palace, ready to do the honors when the guests arrive. Let them be but the geese which will lay golden eggs by and by, and I care not what it now costs to feed them. I have rare wines, music, women, everything, to charm and to ensnare, and they are at your service in the cause of our brotherhood."

"We know it, senor, and now I will hasten on my mission," said the youngest of the three; and he turned away, and walked rapidly up the street towards the Plaza.

The other two went in the same direction, but moved leisurely.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

SCARCELY had the anchor of the *Cloud-rift* settled and taken ground, and her sails been furled, when Clarence Rhett, with the impatience of his ardent nature, had a boat lowered, and he hurried on shore to visit the United States Consulate, to see if letters had not arrived from Salem. His cruise had occupied several weeks since he had sent in letters by his English prize bark, and he felt sure that neither Mr. Everett or Nellie would neglect any opportunity of sending to the point where he had informed them there was the most likelihood of his being able to receive letters.

But he was doomed to disappointment. The consul looked all over the letters in his office, and there was none for Captain Clarence Rhett, or anyone else on board the *Cloud-rift*.

There had been no late arrivals from any Massachusetts port, though two or three vessels were expected to arrive from Boston, and were looked for every hour.

Clarence was sadly disappointed, but he bore it quietly, and at once asked the aid of the consul in introducing him to the proper Spanish officials, so as to enable him to procure wood, water and provisions for his vessel, upon payment for them. The consul informed him, that he would find no difficulty in getting all that he

required, for the hatred the Spaniards held toward the English was such, that they would do anything in their power to aid their enemies. Never before had the flag of the United States been more in favor with the Spanish authorities, than it was then, for the news of several of our late naval victories had reached them, and they were rejoiced to see a young republic snubbing that monarchy upon the ocean, whose boast it was that she ruled the waves.

The consul agreed to call with him, after the usual salute had been fired in the honor of the governor and port, upon the governor, and solicit the necessary permission; and invited him also, whenever he came on shore, to make his home at his house.

These matters all pleasantly arranged, Clarence Rhett returned to his vessel, and hoisting the Spanish flag forward, fired a national salute of twenty-one guns.

The echo of his last gun had hardly ceased reverberating over the beautiful harbor, before the American flag was seen floating from the fore-truck of the Spanish Admiral's ship, a noble three-decker, anchored off the arsenal yard, and the salute was answered, gun for gun.

Clarence, now neatly dressed in uniform not unlike that of the naval officers of his country, and accompanied by Cromwell, again took boat, and paid an official visit to the admiral, by whom he was received in the most cordial, yet dignified manner; for a true Spaniard is as stately in his friendship, as in his enmity—courtly always.

Young Everett was left in charge of the *Cloud-rift* during the absence of the captain and first-mate, having directions to snug up on deck and aloft, and to put the vessel in complete order. None of the crew were to go on shore until further orders, nor were any shore boat, except those containing officers in the Spanish service, to be yet allowed alongside.

Clarence had been gone but a few moments on his visit to the admiral, when a boat manned by a full crew of uniformed seamen, and pulled with the beautiful precision always seen in men-of-war boats, was seen approaching. A young officer, in a rich naval uniform, sat in the stern sheets, and the moment that he was alongside, he ascended the companion ladder, leaving the crew in the boat.

The officer was met at the gangway by young Everett with a low bow.

"Do I address the commander of this beautiful vessel?" asked the young Spaniard, speaking in excellent English.

"No, sir, I am her second officer. The captain and first officer are both away. Will you walk into the cabin, and await their return?"

Everett lifted his cap while he replied to the Spanish officer.

"Thank you, sir," responded the latter, "I am lieutenant Francisco, aid to Captain Martinez, of the Navy of Spain, and nephew to the Conde de Leon with whom we both are spending a brief leave of absence. We were down at the Mole when your vessel came in from sea, and my uncle would give me no rest until I agreed to call on your captain, and invite him to visit my uncle and Captain Martinez at the Palace De Leon, on the Sierra, just outside the city walls. I will wait and see your captain, for my uncle would be angry if I did not deliver his invitation in person; and I would like in the meantime, to look over your vessel, for I am sure I never saw anything so beautiful afloat."

Young Everett was delighted to show such a distinguished-looking young officer around, and there was nothing of the vessel below, on deck, or aloft, that he did not exhibit and point out to his visitor. The guns, arm-chests, and pike racks, were especially examined and commended by the Spaniard, who made the most minute inquiries as to the number of the crew, how they were divided in watches, and what were the rules of duty at sea and in port.

This did not seem strange to Everett, coming from one who seemed to wish to compare the

rules of his own service with ours, and he responded to each question freely and fully.

Lieutenant Francisco had been on board full an hour, when Captain Rhett and his mate returned, well pleased with their visit to the admiral who had tendered them every service in his power.

Everett introduced the young Spaniard to his captain, and Lieutenant Francisco, after a few words of enthusiastic praise of the vessel, delivered the pressing invitation sent by his uncle, the Conde de Leon, who was only too happy, he said, in placing his entire palace at their disposal while the brig remained in port.

Clarence could not but be pleased with this kindness from a wealthy Spanish nobleman, and he promised in the name of his officers as well as for himself, to visit the conde and Captain Martinez, as early as duty would permit. He was waiting, he said, for letters from home, and while he was making some repairs to the brig, and refilling her wood-lockers and water-casks, he would spend as much of his time on shore as he could.

The Spanish officer expressed great satisfaction at this, and then asked, in the name of his uncle, permission to send on board a quantity of fresh provisions and fruit, from the plantation of the conde, as a present to the crew.

This generous offer of articles so grateful to men who had been quite a long time on sea-diet, could not be refused, and Captain Rhett accepted the proposition very thankfully.

Lieutenant Francisco now left in the same handsome style in which he came on board, leaving Captain Rhett and his officers quite delighted with their visitor and the princely hospitality so nobly tendered to them.

"It seems as if these Habaneros could not do enough for us, now that we are at war with their old enemy and conqueror," said Clarence, with a laugh. "Well, it is better to have friends in these latitudes than enemies, and this will make a fine port for us to run prizes into when we cannot easily get them north."

#### CHAPTER XXV.

AFTER reaching shore, and sending his boat's crew to their quarters, Don Francisco took a valante, which was in waiting for him near the landing, and ordered the driver to take him to the Pallazo De Leon as fast as his horse could go.

The calasero obeyed, and within a half hour the vehicle, rattling over the streets of the erra, and in through the arched gateway of a magnificent palace there, halted at its marble front, and Don Francisco hurried in to meet Captain Martinez, and the one of whom he had spoken as a conde though he now, as formerly, only addressed him as Senor De Leon.

"Well, Don Francisco, what fortune?" asked De Leon, as the young man entered the splendidly furnished room, where he and Captain Martinez were seated.

"Good fortune, senor," replied the young Spaniard. "When I got on board the brig, I met the second officer only, a young fool, whom a few flattering words won over in a moment to do all I wished him to. I know everything about the vessel, her armament, great and small, the number of her crew, how they keep watch, all in fact, that I care to know, and even more. I was an hour engaged in pumping him, and feeding his fancy on the sights and enjoyments before him when he could come ashore, before the captain and first officer got back."

"I then extended the invitation of my uncle, the Conde De Leon, to the American captain, who is young in years, but has an old and a wise head for all that. He will visit you, but you must be as wary in your advances toward getting possession of his vessel, as you would be in your approaches to the beautiful wife of a jealous man. I rather over-ran your directions, senor, but I thought our treasury could afford it, when I considered the stake we are to play for. I tendered a present of fruit



and fresh meat to the crew of the vessel in your name."

"You were right," replied De Leon. "And they shall have a princely present. Is the vessel really as fast as she looks to be?"

"Yes, senor. Her captain says that, so far, he has run five knots to any three of the fastest vessels he has sailed with. He has been chased by British fleets in heavy weather, and with light wind, and escaped without any difficulty—once when almost surrounded before he was aware of it."

"How is she found in arms?" asked Captain Martinez.

"She could not be better found. She has a battery of three long pivot guns, a full set of guns, pistols, cutlasses and pikes, for all of her crew, and a large store of ammunition. She lacks for nothing, below or aloft. Everything, too, is in first rate order. With her under our feet, we can defy all the navies afloat, go where and when we please and reap a harvest of gold, such as was never seen before by rovers of the sea. I was in love with the fairy craft when I saw her glide up the harbor; but it almost maddened me when I stood on her deck, and found how perfect she was. She must and shall be ours. If her captain cannot be dealt with gold and pleasure will do anything with the fool of a second mate. I sounded him and got his depth to an inch. The other officer is a quiet man, and I couldn't make much out of him."

"When will we receive a visit from the American?" asked De Leon.

"Not to-morrow, for he is to visit the governor then; but probably the day after."

"All right. That will give time to arrange every thing in a style and magnificence, that will astonish them."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

"Well, doctor, we are in Havana at last," said Captain Rhett to Doctor Joshua just after his visitor, Lieutenant Francisco, had left, and all of the after officers of the brig had sat down to dinner, for in port Captain Rhett made it a rule to allow the boatswain, carpenter, and gunner to take charge of deck watches, so as to relieve the mates, who had enough to perform in watch on and watch off at sea.

"Yes, sir, and an awful nice place it is, I expect. Must be sickly, too; the houses seem so crowded together, and there's no chance for fresh air to sweep amongst 'em. It must be a wonderful nice place for doctorin'," replied the old man.

"It is, in the fever season," said Clarence, smiling. "How do you propose to amuse yourself while we are here, doctor? We shall stay in port for a week or more."

"I'm going to them yaller fever hospitals you told me about to see how creeturs die when they get it," replied the doctor; and I'd like to go to them bull fights, that I've heard tell of. They say four or five fellers get hooked and ripped up at almost every one of 'em and I'd like to see some of that practice."

"Well, doctor, you will have plenty of time for all that. We are also invited to a dinner with the admiral of the port, and to a grand banquet at a rich court outside of the city. You will go with us there, will you not?"

"Yes, sir, I s'pose so. It runs agin my grain to back out from fodder, and these big bugs set tip-top tables, I've heard."

"You will find no lack of delicacies where we go, doctor. But I warn you, when we get ashore we shall meet with some of the handsomest women in the world. You must take care of your heart, doctor."

"Women are poison to me, and I can't endure 'em—handsome or ugly, they're all one to me. I'd rather see one good case of yaller fever than a ship-load of gals, any time," replied the doctor, his face expressing his disgust of the subject brought up.

"You are incorrigible, doctor," said Clarence, with a laugh. "But I know your time

will come—a pair of bright eyes will melt the ice of your nature before long. See if I am not a prophet."

"I don't think the day will ever come," said the doctor, nervously; "but if it does, I have an antidote to the evil. I always carry a bottle of prussic acid in my pocket."

"And would poison yourself before you would yield to love?" said Robert Everett.

"Yes, and the Lord have mercy on my soul," said the doctor, earnestly. "I know 'twould be sinful to commit suicide, but when a poor, weak creetur, like me, gets into deeper trouble than he can bear, what else can he do?"

"I'd endure matrimony like a martyr," said Cromwell, smiling. "But I'm like the doctor, rather offish, when woman are around; so there's no danger of my double-teaming in this world. If I did, I'm sure I shouldn't take a Spanish wife, for they're as jealous as they are loving, and carry a dagger as often as they do a pair of scissors. If the doctor wants proof of that, he can see dozens of dead men ashore here any morning, with daggers stuck into 'em."

"Can I?" said the doctor. "Then I'm goin' ashore every mornin' we're here. Stab wounds is a study I hain't had much of, and I'd kinder like to look into it. It's amazin' to man, what a heap of new things a creetur can larn that travels. When I git back to Salem, I'll put 'Surgerin' Doctor,' onto my shingle, and cut a bigger swell than any of them pill-makers."

And the doctor actually laid down his knife and fork, so wrapped was he in the thought of what he would be when he got back to Salem.

"What duty will be on hand this afternoon, captain?" asked Cromwell.

"Nothing but to let the men trim ship as neatly as they can. Then let them rest till to-morrow. I shall let one half of the crew have liberty from sun-rise to sun-set to-morrow, and the other half the same time the next day. If we stay over a week, they shall have another chance ashore. The half of the crew who remain on board, will break out the hold, and clean the water casks, ready to fill when the tank comes along. The admiral is going to send a government tank from the navy yard. He will also send wood-boats off to us in a day or two."

"Very well, sir, all shall be ready to receive them."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

THE second day the *Cloud-rift* lay in the port was a busy one for Clarence Rhett and his first officer. Everett and the doctor had been allowed leave of absence early in the morning and had gone on shore to see the sights. But Cromwell, with one half the crew, was engaged breaking out the hold, and getting ready to take in provisions and water, and Clarence was on shore, engaged with the consul in visiting government officials, and in calling upon merchants to purchase necessary stores.

The young captain found warm sympathy for the American cause general among the Spanish officers and civilians; therefore there were no business difficulties in his way.

We stated that young Everett and the doctor had gone on shore together. They did not remain long in company, for the doctor did not care to see anything but the hospitals, and finding a person who spoke English and knew their localities, he engaged him to take him there. But Everett had been playing the part of a temperance man so long, that he wanted to get into the saloons, where something more exhilarating than water was to be found, and he quickly broke off from the doctor, and took his own route.

He soon found his way to the "Longa," which from the earliest history of the island, has kept up its name and face as a fashionable, first-class wine and liquor room. Here, seated at one of the little marble-topped tables, with a glass of iced orgeat and brandy before him, and a choice cigar in his hand, he gazed around

at the immense crowd of people, coming and going, smoking and drinking, all seeming to be in the quiet pursuit and enjoyment, too, of comfort close akin to happiness.

Suddenly a hand, cased in a delicate kid glove, was extended to him, and a cheerful voice cried:

"Good-morning, Senor Americano. You are early on shore to-day."

Everett started, for the person who came up and spoke, had advanced from the rear of the place where he was seated, and at the first instant he did not recollect him. But upon looking a second time at the rather handsome, though haughty face, he remembered his visitor of the day before, Lieutenant Francisco.

"I am glad to see you, lieutenant," said he, "for I am quite lost on shore here. I do not speak the language, and, of course, do not know where to go to find amusement."

"I am glad that I met you, then," said the Spaniard. "For I am completely disengaged this morning and have nothing to do. But do not remain here, where people of all castes congregates. Come with me to a more select establishment, where over a cheerful bottle of vino puro de Xeres, I will endeavor to give you some insight of Havana life."

Robert Everett was but too glad to accept the offer of the condescending Spaniard, and rising, he accompanied him to a house in the Calle del Rey, of quite unpretending outward appearance, but inside, splendid beyond any ideas of splendor that Everett had even before formed, both in furniture and decorations.

The young Spaniard who seemed to be particularly at home in the place, told Everett that it was a kind of club house resorted to only by an exclusive set of aristocratic and wealthy Cubans, who could afford to pay roundly for their pleasures.

Ushered by an obsequious servant into a large room, furnished in the most costly manner, the two men took seats, and the servant immediately disappeared.

"There is a pleasant peculiarity about this house," said Don Francisco. "You are never intruded upon by servants with prying eyes and garrulous tongues. Upon that marble table you observe three bells. I will ring the first, and immediately wine of the choicest brands will be brought in. They know my taste, and I hope you will approve it."

And the young Spaniard rung the smallest of the three bells.

In an instant, as if by magic, a part of the floor rose, and a table came up through the aperture, on which stood some bottles of choice wine already opened, glasses and ice, all upon a salver of chased silver.

"It's about my lunch time," said the young Spaniard, and he rung a second bell.

Another table came up in the same manner as the first, upon which salads, plates of cold game, sandwiches, etc., etc., were plentifully distributed.

"This seems indeed magical," said Everett, looking in surprise at the elegance of the lunch, the massive plate upon which it was served, etc.

"Oh, you will not know the full force of my magic power until I ring the third bell," said Don Francisco, smiling. "But I will defer that until we have done justice to the wines and eatables. There is no magic in them, but a reality, which I hope you will enjoy."

And drawing chairs to the lunch-table and filling a glass for his companion and himself of the sparkling Vintago of Xeres, the young officer urged Everett to fall to without further ceremony.

There is nothing that sooner places two comparative strangers upon terms of intimacy than eating and drinking together. And in a little while, over the mellow wine and the delicious food, the two young men grew as chatty and communicative as if they had known each other for ages.

Everett told the young officer that he did not follow the sea for a living, or as a profession, but to please his father, who was one of the



wealthiest merchants in Massachusetts. He also revealed his dislike of Captain Rhett, begging the young Spaniard, however, never to let the latter know of it. He gave, as his reason, the fact that he had an only sister, lovely as an angel, whom young Rhett was trying to entrap into matrimony, and he denounced him as an up-start, rising from beggary upon the charity and favor of his father.

All this confidence suited Don Francisco hugely, and he, on his part, with equal apparent candor, told Robert Everett that he was the nephew and sole heir of the Conde De Leon, whose wealth was immense—almost beyond computation. That he had entered the Spanish navy more for pastime than anything else, and had influence which would keep him on shore when he wanted to be there, or put him on duty afloat when he so desired. As to money—his uncle gave him all that he could spend, and pressed more upon him than he knew what to do with.

All of this was sucked in by young Everett with a degree of credulity that pleased, even more than it surprised, the Spaniard, for he discovered by it that he would find a pliant tool in the young American to aid in carrying out any and all plans which he and his confederates might form.

One, two, and even a third bottle disappeared, of the light, but brilliant wine, and the young American began to feel as if he was breathing the air of Paradise. He never had enjoyed himself half so well before, he said.

"Then it is time for me to ring the third bell," said the Spaniard, with a gay smile, "and to see if my magic power does not bring yet more enchanting pleasures before us."

As he rung the bell, the tables sunk away and disappeared, and in their place arose vases of flowers, of the most beautiful hues, fragrant, also, to an extraordinary degree. Then a sound of distant music, a low, but beautiful quick march, growing louder and louder each instant, fell upon the ears of the astonished young man. While he listened in speechless rapture, it changed into a galopade, and a door opened at the further end of the room, admitting a troupe of beautiful young girls, in the scanty and transparent costume of ballet dancers, who, as the music changed into a voluptuous waltz, circled around and around the room in the most bewildering and bewitching attitudes that ever the eye of man gazed upon.

The music, proceeding from some unseen source, grew wilder and louder, and the feet and limbs of the beautiful girls flew faster and faster, till young Everett almost fancied the room filled with flying angels. Dark eyes, swimming with tender light, were glancing upon him. He could catch glances of swelling bosoms, of rounded limbs, of white and tapering arms, and beckoning hands; and he actually closed his eyes in mere bewilderment, so enchanting did it all seem.

Young Francisco rung the third bell again, and the dancers vanished through the door by which they came, and in a moment all was as still again in the room as if it was tenanted less.

"This is not real—I must be in a dream," murmured Everett, in a low tone, for he almost feared to speak loud in that enchanted room.

"Hush—a great treat is yet to come. La Bella Carolina, the Queen of Song, will make you dream of Heaven, my friend," said Don Francisco in a low tone.

And as he spoke, the door opened again, and a tall woman, of such ravishing beauty that Everett could not take his eyes from her, came forward with a slow and gliding step, seeming to move as if on air, for no sound save the rustling of her dress could be heard.

In her white hands she held a guitar, beautifully ornamented with gold and jewels, and pausing near the vases of flowers, she touched the strings of the instrument, and to its sweet accompaniment, sang with a voice softer, sweeter than anything the American had ever

dreamed of. Her voice was like a flute, and though she sung in Spanish, such was the expression of her lovely face, such the thrilling melody of her notes, that Everett seemed to understand the burden of her theme.

First, it was bold and warlike, and he felt as he gazed upon her flushed face, her wild and flashing eyes, and heard her loud and thrilling notes, as if he could dash forward singly against a thousand men in arms.

Then both voice and expression changed. Her dark eyes seemed to melt into liquid tenderness—her voice was low and trembling, and it seemed to sigh out a gushing fountain of love. It was all harmony, that filled his ears and entranced his senses.

Again there was a change. A look of unutterable sadness came over her face, her eyes were downcast, and tears seemed to come freezing out from beneath her long fringing lashes, while a low, wailing voice broke out in words so full of despair, so utterly sad, that Everett, before he knew what he was about, bowed his head upon his hands and wept.

Suddenly the music ceased. He raised his head; the vision had vanished, the singer was gone, and only Don Francisco was there, in the same seat, looking at him with a pleasant smile.

"What do you think of La Bella Carolina?" asked the Spaniard, quietly. "Her songs seemed to affect you wonderfully."

"She is not human—she is an angel," said Everett, wild with his enthusiastic admiration.

"A fallen angel, I fear," said Don Francisco, with a laugh. "But it would not do for her to hear me say so, or I might get a stiletto between my shoulders. She is quite angelic where she loves, but a fiend incarnate when she hates. If you desire it, you shall be introduced to her, or to any of the pretty dancing girls, who were around us but a little while ago. But I warn you, the acquaintance of these daughters of dance and song is costly, and sometimes dangerous, for they love costly gifts, and most of them have lovers who do not like rivalry, and sometimes use cold steel to put a rival out of the way."

"I care not for cost or for danger; I must see that singer again," said Everett, excitedly. "I never saw such beauty, never heard a voice so utterly sweet, lieutenant, you must pardon me, but I have been carried away by what I have seen and heard."

"I am glad that I have not failed in my endeavor to give you a pleasant insight into a life we Cubans of wealth and leisure can live," said Don Francisco. "I will communicate with La Bella Carolina during the day, and learn from her where she will grant you a private interview. She is very select in making acquaintances, but will deny no friend of mine."

"Oh, I am a thousand times obliged to you," replied Everett. "I know not how to thank you."

"Poh—do not speak of such trifling services. While you stay in Havana, I hope to make many more hours pass agreeably to you. And now let us talk of other matters over a cup of coffee and a cigar," replied the Spaniard, and he rung the first bell once more.

The coffee and cigars came up on a table in an instant, with a small golden lamp at which to light the cigars.

"Now, while we smoke and sip our mocha, I will speak of something which my uncle, the Conde De Leon, was talking about last night. He has almost everything which wealth can command, but he lacks one thing which he must have—a yacht. And he wants one, which, in speed and beauty, can find no superior on the ocean; and he thinks, as I do, that the vessel in which you sail, excels all others afloat in both points. Do you think that she could be bought?"

"I do not know—my father owns one half and Captain Rhett the other. While this war with England lasts, I doubt if either of them would listen to an offer for her," replied Everett.

"Not if the amount offered was full double her cost?" asked Don Francisco.

"No, for if she is, for a year, as lucky as she has been in the last two or three months, she will pay for herself fifty times over. Money will hardly buy her now. In times of peace it would be different."

"But for yourself, would you not rather command her as a yacht, if owned by a man who could fill her cabins with such sirens as have charmed your senses here to-day, than to be her second officer while she is a privateer, with the chances of capture and destruction against her crew?" said the wily Spaniard.

"You need not ask that question twice," said Everett eagerly. "But even if she did belong to your uncle, he would hardly choose me to command her, while you were with him!"

"He would, if I recommend you, for he is one of the dearest and cleverest old uncles you ever knew or heard of. He consults me in everything, and takes my advice in most matters. He lives only for enjoyment and likes to see everyone swim in a sea of pleasure, who are in any way connected with him. If he could get your brig for a yacht, he would make you her commander, I know."

"If I had possession of her how, he should have her at her own price, or for nothing! But Rhett and Cromwell are both above me. Were they out of the way, the command would devolve upon me, and then I could do as I pleased."

"Would it be very difficult to get them out of the way?" asked Don Francisco, quietly, his dark eye bent upon Everett, and seeming to look into his very soul.

"What do you mean?" asked Everett, lowering his voice.

"That they might come on shore, and lose their way, so that they could not find their route back to the brig again," said Don Francisco, in a tone but little louder than a whisper.

Everett looked him in the face, and both in a moment seemed to understand each other.

"If they came ashore together, do you think you could so manage matters that they would not go on board again?" asked the young American.

"Yes, with gold, one can do almost anything in Havana; and thanks to my uncle's treasury, I can command any amount of that article," replied the Spaniard.

"Then you are answered," said Everett. "If they are but out of the way, so that I am in command of the brig, she shall become your uncle's yacht, if I am still to retain the command. Is that a bargain?"

"It is, and I will kiss the holy cross upon it," said Don Francisco. "Now, *Amigo mío*, be silent and prudent, and proceed cautiously, and we will carry the matter through. We must get your captain and his first officer to visit my uncle two or three times at his palace before we act. Since you think he would not listen to an offer to purchase the vessel, I will caution my uncle, and no such offer will be made. We will trust to ourselves, and to you to gain possession of her. Captain Rhett and his first officer will be received with a hospitality, which will make them think that my uncle is one of the most liberal, as well as one of the most enthusiastic friends of the republican cause that they ever met. They shall be thrown completely off their guard by kindness, and then, when the time comes to put them out of your way, the matter will be disposed of as easily as many another case is, which causes very little stir in this city. Scarcely a night passes without some poor devil getting a few inches of steel for a late supper."

"I shall be careful how I stay out late," said Everett, nervously.

"Oh, you need not fear any danger while you are under my protection," said Don Francisco with a smile. "The worst brave in Havana would not dare to injure unbidden, a friend to the Conde de Leon. They know that



justice can be bought as well as evaded with money. In my search for pleasure, I sometimes have to get rid of an obstacle, and a few ounces of gold will always accomplish my object. But I see you have finished your cigar. Now, drive out with me to the palace of my uncle, and we will drive with him, and then we will return to seek the interview with the lovely Bella Carolina. I will write a note, and leave it, before I go."

And the young Spaniard took a card case from his pocket, and wrote a few lines on the back of a card.

As they went out he handed the card to the servant at the door, and told him to take it, at once, to the Senorita Carolina, and to say that they would call for the answer at eight o'clock on that evening.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

"NELLIE, my dear child, what is the matter with you? You are ill, I know, for you are pale as a ghost, and I never see the smile now which always used to welcome me when you came from your chamber in the morning. Tell me, Nellie, tell your old father, what is the matter with you. Do you want a doctor?"

These earnest words were spoken by Mr. Everett, as his daughter came down to the breakfast-table one morning, some two months after Clarence Rhett had sent his prize into port, and sailed with the *Cloud-rift* for southern latitudes.

"Father, I am not ill, but I am so anxious about the fate of the *Cloud-rift* and—those on board. It is so long since we have heard from her, and though I am not superstitious, yet three times have I dreamed of seeing my brother Robert with his hands red with blood, and that fearful look of hatred on his face. These dreams have worried me, and I cannot help it."

"Dear child, you should not be so nervous. Dreams are but idle fancies of an overwrought brain. It is not strange that we have not heard from the *Cloud-rift* yet, for our whole coast has been so closely blockaded by the British that vessels could neither get out or in. The schooner which was to have left Boston for Havana, with my letters on board, is in port yet, but I got a letter from the captain last night informing me that all but two of the English fleet, off the Boston waters, had gone south, and he meant to try to slip out in the course to-night, or to-morrow night, as the new moon set early. If he gets out he will make the voyage out and back as quick as possible, he has been so long delayed, and when he comes back we will be sure to hear from the brig; and then you will see what faith you can put in dreams."

"What is the name of the schooner, father?"

"The *Carrollita*, Nellie, commanded by Captain Brady, who used to run a fruit schooner for me to the same port."

"Captain Fred Brady? I remember him well," said Nellie, musingly. "He used to always send me a basket of choice fruit when he came into port."

"Yes, I remember. He sails for Goodrich & Co. now. But let me have my coffee, child. The toast is getting cold, and so is the steak. And do try and eat something yourself. You are getting as thin as a shadow."

"I will try, dear father," replied Nellie, as she poured out the coffee for him.

But so absent-minded was she that she handed it to him without adding cream and sugar as usual.

"If I did not know better, Nellie, I'd think you had fallen in love lately," said the merchant, smiling. "You have forgotten to sweeten my coffee."

"Forgive me, father; I do believe I am half crazy," replied Nellie, taking back his cup to correct her neglect.

"Look out, child—that is salt, not sugar, you are dipping your spoon into," cried Mr. Everett, laughing.

"So it is—I believe I'm getting blind or foolish," said Nellie, angry with herself for being so careless.

She now saw that his coffee was properly fixed, and she tried to eat something herself; but her mind seemed preoccupied, and she only answered her father, when he spoke, in monosyllables.

As soon as he had finished his breakfast, she rose with him from the table, saw him to the door on his way to business, and then hurried to her chamber, for a wild strange plot was at work in her mind. What it was, future chapters must reveal.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

On the fourth day after he arrived in port, Clarence Rhett and his officers Cromwell, and Everett, and the doctor accepted the invitation extended by the Conde de Leon through his nephew, Lieutenant Francisco, to partake of the hospitalities of the conde at his palace.

Young Everett had made no mention on board that he had already dined at the palace, for he had been advised not to do so by Don Francisco, as also by the conde and Captain Martinez, with both of whom the young man had come to a perfect understanding.

Clarence had seen in his eastern voyage the great display of wealth and magnificence made by the oriental princes, but never in all his travels had he seen a richer display than met his eyes in the palace of Conde de Leon.

Nothing in the shape of luxury in furniture or ornament or in gratification of animal as well as mental taste, was lacking. The table of the conde was loaded down with choice viands, served on plates of gold and silver; wines and liquors of the choicest kinds, all sparkled on the board and a servant to each guest stood ready to execute every wish that was uttered.

The conde, in extending this kindness to Clarence quite won the heart of the latter by his declaration that he did so out of his great and loving sympathy for the brave and young republic which dared to dispute old England's boasted supremacy of the waves.

And when after he and his officers had been regaled sumptuously, and feasted, too, with music both vocal and instrumental, of the best and rarest character, they returned pleased and gratified beyond measure.

Clarence had insisted upon the conde coming on board the *Cloud-rift*, to partake of such hospitality as he could offer, and the conde had promised to do so at an early day.

"Doctor, what do you think of Havana now?" asked Clarence of Doctor Joshua, when they were all once more on board the brig.

"I like the place well, and the people better," said the doctor. "They seem to think that a Yankee is about as good as one of their saints, and they feed and drink a creature awful nice. I think I'm getting fattened up some, though I've always been counted as one of Pharaoh's lean kind. I've only one fault to find with these folks here."

"What is that, doctor?" asked Clarence.

"They seem to think that we're all copper-lined and copper-fastened inside," said the doctor. "They make everything they cook red hot with red pepper. I'm all burned up with it."

"You'll soon get used to that, doctor. And how about the yellow fever? Have you seen any cases of that?"

"Oh, yes, I've seen a dozen die of it, and learned how their doctors treat it. When a chap gets the *vomits negro*—that's what they call it—they just shove a tablespoonful of calomel into him, without stopping to weigh it. If that cures the patient, well and good—if it doesn't, and he dies, then it is well and good still, for all the doctors care. That is their rule and their dose, and it must cure or kill."

"Which does it do in a majority of cases?" asked Clarence.

"If the patient has a constitution as strong

as that of a mule, he will most likely outlive the dose. If he hasn't, the yellow fever kills him; so their victims say. But I'd say the calomel done the job."

"Well, you need not experiment in their practice with me, if I should get sick," said Clarence with a laugh. "Have you seen a bull fight yet, as you desired, doctor?"

"No, sir, there is to be one Sunday, and I'm going to that."

"What, doctor, you a Massachusetts man and go to a place of amusement on Sunday? I'm really astonished to hear you say so!"

"I believe, cap'n, that I left Massachusetts at home when I came away," said the doctor, gravely. "I used to hear my old boss say, when a chap gits to Rome he must do as the Romans do, when he is in Turkey he must do as the Turkies do; and now I'm in Cuba, I don't see what harm there is in doin' as I see Cubas do. They don't make no fuss about keepin' Sunday, and why should I? When I get back to Massachusetts, if I ever do, I'll eat cold pork and beans and hear preachin' on Sunday, just as I used to, I s'pose."

"Well, I was only trying to tease you a little, doctor. You must not mind my bantering."

"No more I will, cap'n. How long will we stay here, do you think, sir?"

"Only a few days more, doctor. We are ready for sea now, but I feel anxious to hear from home, and as some Boston vessels are looked for every day, I will wait a little while in hopes of getting a mail. A stay here, on ripe fruit, and fresh meat, and vegetable diet for the men, will improve their health, will it not?"

"Yes, cap'n—of course it will. But the men must keep out of the night dews. The hot sun in the day time, and the cold dews at night, is what fetches those that are not used to it. I've learned that much since I've been here, and it is worth rememberin'."

"So it is, doctor, and I will see that the men are cautioned about it. They seem to take pretty good care of themselves so far."

"Yes, sir; but it's because they know they have got to, or suffer. I've told 'em if I got to dosin' 'em, they'd have more pukin' and sweatin' to go through than ever they've heard tell of before and I reckon I've kinder got 'em skeered. Folks can be skeered into sickness, and they can be skeered out of it, too. I knowed a woman once, that had the rheumatiz so she couldn't walk. She was a layin' in bed, on as cold a winter day as you ever shivered in, and all the folks was off away from the house on some arrant or another, when a brand rolled out from the fireplace, and set the carpet ablaze. She laid and hollered for a little while, but no one didn't hear her, and the fire kept a spreadin', and she knowed sartin sure, that she'd be burnt up alive if she laid there. So she stopped hollerin', and up and jumped out of bed in her night-gown, jist as she was, and put off out of doors just as hard as she could run, forgetting all about her rheumatiz. The house got all afire before anybody came, and she had to walk most half a mile to a neighbor's, barefoot, through the snow. You'd have thought 'twould have killed her, wouldn't you, cap'n?"

"To be sure I would," replied Clarence Rhett.

"Well, it didn't," said the doctor. "Just as sure as my name is Joshua for long, and old Josh for short, it cured her, and I'm a livin' witness to it. The rheumatiz, you see, was clean skeered out of her. And I knowed another woman that had the fever and ague awful—so bad that you'd feel the house shake when the chills took her. She wasn't skeered out of that, though. 'Twas madness done it. She had an awful temper of her own, and when she got her Ebenezer riz, old Satan couldn't skeer her. She was in a chill one day, and shakin' awful bad, when a Jew peddler came along that had sold her some starched cotton handkerchiefs for linen, two years before, and



in making change gin her a pewter quarter dollar besides. Now, she knew the mean cuss the minute she set eyes on him, and all shakin' with the chill as she was, she taxed him with it.

"He up and said he'd never been in her house, nor set eyes on her before. Her Ebenezer riz when she heard him say that, and she jumped out the bed and pitched into him, till he hollered murder, and everything else but his prayers, and then she tossed him, pack and all, out of doors. She got so hot a doin' this, that she forgot her chill, and she never had one after that either."

Rhett laughed as the doctor related these miraculous cures, but was spared from hearing any more of them, by being sent for to see to some duty on deck.

### CHAPTER XXX.

AFTER Don Francisco had taken Robert Everett to the Palace De Leon for the first time, and introduced him to his uncle and Captain Martinez, and the young American had dined and been filled as full of wine as he could be and "navigate" without tumbling down, the Spaniard brought him back, agreeably to promise, to see the beautiful woman whose loveliness and harmonious voice had so enchanted him in the morning.

The wine which he had taken tended to make him more inflammable than ever, and when he found himself face to face again with the person whom he thought to be the most beautiful being he had ever seen, he actually went on his knees and kissed her hands, when Don Francisco presented him to her.

Her smile seemed to him to be angelic, as she spoke to him in Spanish, and motioned for him to rise; but as he did not understand the language, he appeared to Don Francisco to know what she meant.

"She says that she is flattered by the preference such a handsome and noble-looking young man expresses for her, and she hopes to improve the acquaintance," replied Don Francisco. "She is very sorry that she does not understand English, or you understand Spanish, so that you might converse with her freely."

"Tell her that she can never be half so sorry as I am. That I never heard music in my life until I heard her sing this morning, and that I shall not rest until I have learned her language so that I can tell her how much I love her."

Don Francisco having translated this speech to the lady, she replied in words which he thus rendered to the enamored young American:

"She says that love needs no language to express itself. It speaks through the eyes—it finds words in sighs, volumes in looks, and whole histories in actions."

"It is true, and if I had a face as expressive as hers, she could read that my whole soul was devoted to her," replied Everett.

"There is danger in loving her, she bids me tell you," said Don Francisco, after translating his remarks to the lady, and hearing her reply.

"Tell her I fear no danger. I would face a hundred men for one sweet smile from her," said the infatuated young man.

"She says the danger will not come from any male rivals," said Don Francisco, "but if she should once love you and find you false to her—should ever detect you paying any attention to another woman, she would kill you. She never could bear a rival in your heart."

"Tell her that there is no woman on earth so beautiful as she, and that the man who could desert her for another, ought to die a thousand deaths," answered Everett.

"She says such love and such words as you breathe must be rewarded. She will try to love you, for you look as if you could be trusted."

"Could be? I will be. Truth shall go hand in hand with my love for her," said Everett. "Tell her who I am, and who my father is. Tell her I will marry her, and when my father dies, she will have the wealth of a kingdom at

her command. Tell her there is nothing on earth she can ask, that I will not get for her."

Don Francisco translated this wild outburst, and the lady replied that there was no mercenary thoughts in her bosom—that the love which was based upon fortune was not such love as a Spanish woman could feel.

Everett now begged Don Francisco to ask her if she would go to sea with him in case he should have the command of a beautiful yacht. She bade Don Francisco say, that if "once she yielded her heart to him, and she feared that she would have to, she would go with him to the end of the earth, on sea or on land; that nothing but death should ever tear them apart."

"Then, were a thousand Rhett's and Cromwells between me and her, they should die!" cried Everett. "If you, Don Francisco, find any difficulty in getting men to put them out of the way, I will do the deed with my own hands. Were hell itself to be my portion, I would dare it's Sable King, to call La Bella Carolina mine."

"She shall be yours," said Don Francisco. "I can see, by her looks, that her heart is more than half won. But she bids me say that your first interview must be brief with her, for she has a musical engagement to-night which she must fill. She hopes the day will soon come, when she will not have to sing for anyone but you."

"It shall not be my fault if that day is long deferred," said Everett. "Tell her I go, but only to think of her while I wake, and to dream of her while I sleep."

"She says you must come soon to see her again—that whenever you send your card in to her, she will be visible to you, and she hopes you will soon learn her language, so as to talk without an interpreter."

"Tell her this night I will commence to study it, and love shall aid me in mastering it," replied Everett.

The lady now extended her hand to the young man, who pressed it wildly to his feverish lips, and as she retired from the room, his glance followed her till she disappeared.

"What do you think of her now?" asked Don Francisco, as they left the house.

"I do not think, I am too much in love to think. I worship her!" said Everett. "I cannot rest or enjoy life, till she is mine."

### CHAPTER XXXI.

THE schooner *Carrollita* was one of those snug, not very fast, but very safe and commodious vessels, for which Boston builders are even yet famous. She was about two hundred tons by measurement, large for those days, rigged as a fore-and-after, but with a large square-sail yard to each mast, by which, when the wind was abeam or abaft it, two immense square sails could be hoisted to accelerate her speed. Though, when on a wind or the wind was forward of the beam, she was reduced to the fore-and-aft canvas. This consisted of a fore and mainsail, jib and flying jib, and two flying gaff topsails.

In case of heavy weather, she had two small-corned sails, and her main and fore-stays to lay-to under.

Her cabin was large, and took up full one-half of the room abaft the mainmast, being under a high half-deck, with all the cabin store-rooms in the hold under it.

In front of this cabin walked Captain Fred Brady, a neat and rather dandified man for a sailor, of middle age, bright-eyed and rosy-cheeked, though he had weathered full five and thirty years of stormy life upon the ocean. His schooner was loaded to the bend with notions and garden-truck for a Cuban market, and she laid at the long wharf, with but a single bow and stern line out, waiting only for darkness to set in to try and make the hazardous run past the English blockaders off the harbor's mouth, and get to sea. The sun was just setting when Captain Brady saw a very neat-looking young

sailor-boy, with a large bundle under his arm, come hastily down the wharf, and jump lightly on board.

"Can I see the captain, sir?" said the boy in a low voice.

"You can, and do, my little chap," said Captain Fred, pleasantly, for all of his crew were aboard, sober and steady, and he was in the best of humor. "What can I do for you?"

"You are going to Havana, are you not, sir?" asked the boy.

"Yes, if we have good luck, and none of the John Bull men-of-war catch me," replied Captain Fred.

"If you please, sir, don't you want a nice cabin boy? I'm very handy, can wash dishes, set the table, and cook, too, if you want me to."

Captain Fred looked at the boy attentively. He saw that his hands were very white, and that he had not been used to hard work. His face was very red, flushed with excitement, his eyes were liquid as if but one harsh word would bring tears from them.

Therefore he spoke kindly when he said: "I'm afraid you're running away from your parents, my boy."

"Indeed, no, sir—mother is dead and—and—oh, please do let me go with you, sir."

And the tear cloud gave way, and the rain of that young heart's storm poured down the boy's cheeks.

"There, there, don't cry, my poor boy. You shall go with me, if you want to. I have only my old steward in the cabin, and he is getting stiff and careless. Go into the cabin, and tell him to show you the little state-room next to the cupboard. You may put your bundle in that, for I have no passengers this trip, and you can have a snug and cosy place to sleep in."

"Thank you, sir; I will be so good and so handy, you will not be sorry that you let me go."

And the boy hurried away into the cabin. "A nice looking youngster—I like him," said Captain Fred, complacently.

And then, as the twilight gloom began to deepen over the town, and cast a darker shade upon the water, he sung out to his crew:

"Look sharp, lads, and stand to the halliards. I shall cast off as soon as it is so dark that I can't see the white of that cursed cruiser's topsails down the bay, and that will be in five minutes, the way night is hurrying on."

The men, some twelve or fourteen in number, sprang to the halliards, and stood waiting the order to hoist away, watching the rippling of the water in the harbor, stirred by a brisk northwesterly wind.

The order soon came, and ere "hoist away" had fairly left the lips of Captain Fred, the fore and mainsails were sliding up the well-greased masts, while not a creaking block betrayed the movement.

In a few minutes the sails were up, and then the cheerful voice of Captain Fred sung out:

"Up jib and cast off the shore-lines, fore and aft."

The order was obeyed, and the next instant the anchor swayed off into the stream, and as the sails filled nicely, she shot away from the wharf like a thing of life.

"Ease off the sheets a little, Mr. Evalong, take the helm till we get outside," cried the captain, his last order being addressed to his first mate, a long, dried-up-looking son of Cape Cod.

"Mr. Ackerman," he added to the second mate, "you take the lookout forward, and keep your eyes peeled sharp, for we may run right on to one of them cruisers before we know it. Not a light or even a pipe must be seen on board for the next three hours."

The schooner was now full a cable's length clear of the wharf, and sliding away swiftly from it, but so still was the wind and water, that the noise of a chaise driven furiously down the wharf, could be distinctly heard and the dim outlines of it seen; but the schooner kept



gliding on, and a hail from a person who sprung from the chaise, waving his hat furiously, was just heard, but could not be understood.

"You're too late, whatever you want," said Captain Fred, quietly. "I wouldn't stop the schooner now for anybody less than the President of the United States, without he hailed me from the mouth of a cannon."

Captain Fred had been looking at the person on shore while he spoke, and had not seen the wild look of terror in the face of his little cabin-boy, who had watched the progress of the chaise down the wharf with trembling anxiety. The anxious look, however, passed from the face of the boy, when he heard the captain say that he would not stop the schooner, and the lad glided back into the cabin unnoticed, while Captain Fred passed forward among his crew, cautioning them not to speak a loud word, or to make any noise, lest it might attract attention on board the vessels which he was about to try to pass; for he knew that watchful eyes and listening ears would be on the alert in them.

As the schooner drew out from under the land, and felt the freshening breeze, she went faster and faster, and now the night grew all dark around them, and only by the compass course, shown in a well-shaded binnacle, could it be known how she was heading.

Three hours of anxious silence followed, and for the last hour of that time, the long heavy swell of the ocean waves told that the schooner was outside of all shoals and headlands.

Then Captain Fred, who had all this time walked the deck, anxiously, said in a low tone:

"Half the crew can go below. The first mate's watch stay on deck. We're all clear now. Mr. Evalong, keep her away south-east by east, and let one of the regular men relieve you at the helm!"

These orders obeyed, and the sails trimmed to suit the course, Captain Fred went into the cabin, with a light heart and a contented air.

The lamps had just been lighted by his order, and the captain looked pleased, as he saw his little cabin-boy moving about with a light and active step, setting the supper table as softly as if he had been engaged at such work from the days of his babyhood.

"Not sea-sick? Been to sea before, I reckon!" said Captain Fred to the lad.

"Yes, sir, a little in fishing boats outside. I never was sea-sick even there."

"So much the better. You'd break no crockery, and don't spill the victuals all over the deck, when you bring the dishes from the caboose," said Captain Fred. "And now you're name—I must know what to call you, when you're wanted."

"You call me Clarence, sir," said the boy.

"Clarence? That is a very nice name. I never knew but one Clarence, and he was just about as nice a chap as they make in hard times. I had him with me when I run a schooner in the fruit trade, for old Mr. Everett, down in Salem. A smart boy he was, and has turned out a full man I've heard."

Where were Captain Fred Brady's eyes just then, that he did not see the crimson flush which passed over his young cabin-boy's face, when he thus alluded to Clarence Rhett! His eyes were in the right place all the time, but they could not see through the back of the cabin boy's head, for that individual had turned his head away while Captain Fred was speaking, and seemed to be looking very intently at the steward, who was chipping some dried beef in the pantry.

"He's off privateerin' now, and I've got letters in my mail bag for him from Salem, which I reckon he'll be glad to get. There's two of 'em in the old man's hand writin', and one that isn't. It's in a neat little hand, such as I've seen mor'n once, when I used to send up pretty Nellie baskets of fruit from the schooner. Master Clarence always used to beg leave to carry up them baskets, and I reckon there was more than fruit went with 'em sometimes."

All of this was spoken musingly and to himself, by Captain Fred, but his cabin-boy was listening to it with a strange but sweet smile on his quiet face, which he took care to keep turned away, so that the captain did not observe it.

In a little while the supper table was set, and so neatly, that Captain Fred looked at it with surprise.

"How do you like my new cabin-boy, steward?" he asked, while the youngster had gone to the caboose after the tea.

"Amazin' well, sir," said the steward, an old parchment-colored faced man who had sailed with Captain Fred ever since he commanded a vessel. He's as spry as a cat, and just the handiest with dishes that I ever saw. He don't leave scarce anything for me to do."

"So much the better for you, steward, for it's full time you had help in the cabin. I've been thinking of looking for some one a good while, and this youngster come aboard just at the right time. He will be a great relief to you if he keeps on as well as he has commenced."

The return of Clarence, as he called himself, with the tea, put a stop to this colloquy, and the captain was informed that supper was ready.

"Then call down Mr. Ackerman, so that he can get his supper and relieve Evalong," said Captain Fred, and when the second mate came into the cabin he took his seat at the table.

"You're a real handy boy, Clarence," said the captain, as the boy poured out his tea. "I've not seen my table look so well for some time, when I get to Havana, I'll get some new crockery and some white tablecloths, for I see you'll take care of things. Who scoured the knives so brightly?"

"I did, sir—they were so black and dirty-looking," said the boy.

"So they were. They look as good as new. And this toast, I'm sure old black Pompey never took the pains to make that."

"No, sir, I found some rather stale bread in the cupboard, but toasting it freshens it, and burns out the stale taste."

"So it does, steward, you'll have to take lessons from Clarence."

"If you please, sir, I'll make some cake to-morrow. I see you have plenty of eggs on board," said the boy.

"Why, how on earth did you learn to make cake?"

"I used to watch mother, sir. She baked such nice cake. I know I can put in such things as she did."

"Well, I'm not much of a cake hand, but for novelty's sake, you can try. That is, if you and the steward can agree, for he is your boss as far as the cabin and stores go."

"Oh, sir, I will get along very well with him. I know he'll like me when he sees me wash the dishes, and put things away in their proper places, as they ought to be."

"Yes—I shall like the boy," said the steward. "He's amazin' handy—amazin', amazin'!"

And the old man sat down on a camp-stool before the cup-board, for he saw that there was no need of his waiting on the table while Clarence was around.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

TEN days had elapsed since the *Cloud-rift* first dropped anchor in the harbor of Havana. She was again fully ready for sea in every particular, and her young captain began to be impatient to plough blue water once more. But his great anxiety to hear from Salem still kept him port-bound, a matter which satisfied his crew, for they having behaved well, were allowed a good deal of liberty in the day-time, though none but the officers were permitted to stay on shore at night.

Clarence seldom went on shore at night, scarcely even visited the shore except on official visits, for he was far more happy in his cabin,

where he could study the sweet face of Nellie Everett, in her portrait, than in any company which he could find on shore.

Cromwell was ever attentive to duty, true-seaman-like, to care to go much on shore, but young Everett was never on board when he could make an excuse to get on shore, or get permission to remain there.

After a couple of visits to the Palace de Leon, Clarence felt somewhat sickened at the overwrought attentions paid to him by the conde and his rather suspicious-looking and strange acting friend, Captain Martinez, nor did he like the great intimacy between young Everett and Don Francisco.

He had cautioned the former about it, and with his usual villainous duplicity, Everett had pretended to heed the warning, and to avoid the company of the young Spaniard, but, in truth, meetings became more and more frequent.

Infatuated almost to madness by the beautiful siren known to him as La Bella Carolina, really one of the band to which De Leon, Francisco and Martinez belonged, the young mate spent every moment of the time which he could command, in her company. All of the money which he had, and all that he could get from Clarence, was spent in purchasing presents for her.

On the evening of the tenth day in port, Robert Everett had obtained permission from Captain Rhett to go on shore and remain for the night, his ostensible reason being a wish to attend the opera to hear "Anna Bolena."

But instead of visiting the opera house, his steps were immediately directed to the house in the Calle del Rey where he had been first taken by Don Francisco. Upon knocking at the door, it was opened by the porter, who by this time knew him well.

He handed the servant his card, and bade him take it in to the Senora La Bella Carolina.

The latter, however, hesitated to take it, and told him that two gentlemen wished to see him in the *quarto conversational*, and that he had orders to conduct him there as soon as he arrived.

"Their names?" asked Everett, for the porter spoke English quite well.

"The Senors Don Francisco and Captain Martinez," replied the porter.

"Then I will see them first, and the lady afterward," said Everett, and he followed the porter to the room known in the establishment as the conversation-room.

The steward opened the door, announced his name and retired.

Don Francisco and Captain Martinez met the young mate with indications of coldness, or distrust, and neither of them, as usual, offered him their hands.

This he noticed at once, and, with an air of anxiety, he asked, as soon as the first salutations had passed, what was the matter.

"Matter enough to make us believe that you are not dealing fairly with us, Senor Everett," said Captain Martinez, with a scowl. "It is three days since you promised to put both Captain Rhett and his friend Cromwell where the sharks would fatten on their bodies. They yet live!"

"Yes, because no good opportunity has occurred for me to put my plans in execution; and as the day has not been set for the brig to sail, and she will not sail until mails arrive from the United States, I did not think that haste was imperative."

"But, senor, you said three days ago that they should not live four and twenty hours. You swore it on your bended knees before the Bella Carolina, who loves you almost to madness, and she is dying for the hour when she can skim over the blue water with you by her side," said Don Francisco.

"She loves me—I know she loves me, and the deed shall be done before another sun rises!" cried Everett, excitedly.

"How will you do it?" asked Captain



Martinez doubtfully. "Single handed and alone?"

"No—I have three confederates on board who will do anything I bid them do. It is my mid-night watch, if I go on board, though expecting to stay on shore, I got the boatswain to keep it for me. I will go on board, and in the mid-watch, I and my companions will go down into the cabin and finish both Cromwell and the captain, and drop their bodies from the cabin windows, so weighted with ballast that they will sink instantly. Do you see my points?"

"I see points, but not very good ones," said Martinez, after a moment of deliberation. "If either the captain or the mate should be awake and on their guard, you could not succeed without alarming the crew. If even you did succeed, there would be no reasonable way to account for their absence from the ship, when they were known to be on board at bedtime, and to have retired as usual. Suspicion would arise that they had been murdered; their bodies might be dragged for and discovered. No, sir, your plan will not do. It is bad. We must form and act upon another. Both of the marked individuals must be decoyed on shore for some purpose or other, and then the steel must do the work. If you can manage to get Captain Rhett and the mate on shore to-morrow night, at this hour or later, I will try to so dispose of them in such way as will disprove the idea that they were killed on board. They must be murdered and robbed on shore, to show that the deed was done for gain. That done properly, all suspicion will be cast from you; you will, as the next in rank, take command of the schooner, and then you can apparently sell to us, keep such of the crew as we want on board, and discharge the rest."

"Your plan, captain, is the very thing. But how to get them on shore together—that is the question. Lately Captain Rhett never comes on shore, and never at night," said Everett, with a troubled look.

"He must be enticed on shore in some way. Does he care for women? A note from one could be written, saying she had seen and loved him, soliciting an interview," suggested Don Francisco.

"If you could see him sit for hours, as he does, gazing at the portrait of my sister which hangs in his cabin, you would see how useless it would be to attempt to put the thought of another woman in his head."

"You say that he expects letters," said Martinez. "How would it be to send word on board, just after dark, that a Boston vessel had arrived?"

"He would take his boat and go to work for the vessel at once, and find out that it was false," said Everett.

"Not if the message apparently came from the American Consul, telling him that letters were there for him," said Martinez.

"That is so," said Robert. "But what would we do with Cromwell? It is not likely that he would leave the vessel at the same time."

"No, but if the captain did not go back, he would come ashore to look for him, would he not?" asked Martinez.

"Yes. That is so," replied Everett.

"Then he, too, could be disposed of. Now, are any of these confederates of yours men of nerve, who would use steel skilfully and without fear? As they know who is to be struck, it would be better to have them do it, than men whom we could engage on shore, for they will not strike wrong men."

"Two of them, I think, are," said Everett.

"Two are enough," said Martinez.

"Then, Otis and Bascomb will do," said Everett, musingly. "Brattle might join, but I noticed that he flinched when under fire, on board the brig."

"For all that he might be first rate at stabbing in the dark," said Don Francisco, with a laugh. "Give me a coward for a thief or a murderer any day; for their cowardice makes

them so prudent, that they will almost always escape detection. When no return blow is expected, the most nervous man in the world could strike firmly."

"Perhaps Don Francisco is right," said Everett. "But at any rate, I do not like to trust Brattle. He is too talkative."

"Well, as you like. Now let the other men get permission to come on shore, and, once here, they can remain and be ready, at any moment, for the work."

"What, desert?"

"Yes, let them appear to desert, and we will provide safe quarters for them. If we can get Rhett ashore to-morrow night, the work can be done then. It is almost too late to operate to-night."

"Very well, then I can spend the evening with my queen of song, La Bella Carolina, the magnificent."

"Yes. Don Francisco and myself have an engagement, and we will not detain you any longer. Let us see you or hear from you to-morrow, and have your men on shore early, so that they can be armed and instructed. You know where to send them to. Give them a note to me."

"I will, captain," said Everett, as Martinez and his companion rose to leave.

"Since all is now understood, and you appear anxious to push the work forward, I confess more confidence than I had in you before, Senor Everett," said Don Francisco; and I wish you a pleasant evening with the beautiful Bella Carolina. To win such a woman as she is, a man ought to dare any deed, however perilous. But as matters now look, your peril will be nothing. Management is all that is required."

"And the two Spaniards left the room."

"Now, to find the Bella Carolina," said Everett.

And he went in search of her

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

AFTER Robert Everett had asked permission to go on shore, on the evening alluded to in the previous chapter, Cromwell, who was on deck when the boat that carried him left the brig's side, said to himself in a musing way:

"There is mischief at work in that young devil's head. Never did a nor'-wester show signs before its coming plainer than he does. He has got part of the crew to think a great deal of him, by his soft words and by making their duty easy when he is on watch. Over twenty of them were his boon companions in Salem, and they shipped in the brig through his influence. He always shows a preference to them. What he does on shore so much is another mystery to me. He consorts with that Francisco and Martinez, and I am more than satisfied that there is no good in them. I don't like to speak ill of anyone, but I must have a talk with the captain about this."

And the mate descended into the cabin.

In the after cabin, reclining upon a settee, looking musingly up at the portrait of Nellie Everett, he found Captain Rhett.

"Captain," said he, bluntly, coming at once to the point, "I believe that Bob Everett is studying out some nasty trick to play us."

"How so? What discovery have you made, Mr. Cromwell?" asked Clarence, with a look of surprise on his fine face.

"I can hardly tell, sir, only I have noticed this. He is one thing when your eye is on him, and another when it is not. He is as pleasant as sunshine when he is talking to you, but I have seen him, when your back was turned, regard you with a look of hatred blacker than a thunder cloud. He hates me, I know, for he takes but little pains to conceal it. That I do not care for, for he never can get to windward of me, while I have my eyes open. But he means to do something to injure you, I'm sure. You advised him not to keep company with that Francisco any more; he told you he would not. Yet he never goes

ashore without going direct to meet him; and I am as well satisfied that that Spaniard is a regular cut-throat, as I am that the moon is not made of green cheese. He pretends to you that he never drinks. I can prove that he always takes liquor when he goes on shore, and on board too, eating burnt coffee to take away the scent from his breath. I dare say that a good quantity could be found in his state-room now, if you were to look into it."

"Well, it may be that your suspicions have good foundation, Mr. Cromwell, though I hate to think so, his father having so fondly rested in the thought that his cruise would make a man of him. But we will watch him closely hereafter. If he is right, it will do no harm. If he is wrong, the more the pity, but we can foil any evil which he designs."

"He can do us no harm here in port, sir, without he means personal harm to either you or me, when we are on shore, where a man can have another one's throat cut for a doubloon. But at sea, if we were to have a great many men away in prizes, he might create a mutiny in the brig. I wish he never had come on board."

"So do I," said Captain Rhett; "I opposed it at first, but his father said he had no hopes of him unless I would take him to sea, and for his sake I did it. As to his going any more with those suspicious Spaniards I will put a stop to it. When he again asks permission to go on shore, it will not be given. He has drawn a great deal of money from me already—more than his share of the prize will come to, and wanted more this afternoon. I questioned him as to his manner of spending so much, and he said he had been buying some jewelry for his sister. But he did not offer to show it to me, and I strongly suspect, that he has been a losing customer at some of the monte banks in town. I know that he used to gamble, and it is not likely that he has got rid of the habit. He has liberty until to-morrow morning, but that will be the end of his shore-going. I wish a Boston vessel would come in with letters for us, for delay here now is irksome. I will not stay here much longer, whether a mail comes or not."

"I am glad to hear it, sir, for the crew have been here long enough. When we were at sea, they rather liked to exercise at the brig's guns, and with small arms. Now, it is hard work to get them at it at all."

"Well, they shall soon go where they will have exercise enough. When I leave Havana, I shall run the line from the West Indies to the mouth of the English Channel, and take what prizes I can, and when I get into the channel, right under their own noses, I'll make the British think that the ghost of old Paul Jones had come upon them."

"That will be rare fun, sir," said Cromwell. "Briskly, too; but the brig is equal to anything, I believe. Her match in speed has yet to be built."

"That's so," said Clarence, as the mate turned and left the cabin.

### CHAPTER XXXIV.

WHEN Robert Everett returned on board the brig in the morning, he was so pale, and nervous as well, that Captain Rhett could not avoid noticing it.

"You do not seem well, Mr. Everett," said he. "Had you not better consult Doctor Fowler. In this climate fever creeps so insidiously upon the best of constitutions, that one cannot be too careful, when symptoms appear, to take early advice."

"There's nothing the matter with me, sir," said Everett, nervous, however, in tone as well as manner. "If there was, I do not think I'd trouble old Fowler with it. He might do to doctor cows, but not me."

Robert Everett might not have made that remark, had he known that the old doctor was at that moment in his state-room, not six feet from him, engaged in stuffing the skin of a monkey for preservation.



But there the doctor was, and when he heard the spiteful "fling" made by Everett, he opened his door, and said, in a tone as dry as the music from an old saw when operated on by a coarse file:

"If I'm good on cows, Bob Everett, I don't see why I couldn't cure a jackass."

Everett turned a shade paler than he was before, and to turn off the matter, said:

"I've got a headache this morning, sir, and speak without thinking what I say. What are you doing there, doctor?"

"Preserving a specimen. Don't consider it personal—though when alive the animal did look a good deal like you," snarled the doctor, drawing the door of his state-room to again.

"Well put, but I suppose I deserved it," said Everett, trying to laugh, but it was a feeble effort.

"I wish to have a little serious talk with you, Mr. Everett," said Clarence, kindly, but with a grave look and tone. "Of late you seem to have lost all taste for duty on board, and to have a constant desire to be on shore. You have also used a very large sum of money, and, as a friend, and one who owes so much to your father for his kindness to me from boyhood up, I feel it a duty to speak words of caution to you. These Spaniards are professed gamblers, and adepts at cheating—or a majority of them are. At a monte table you would have no chance of winning, unless they allowed you to win a small stake, to draw you into risking a larger one."

"I do not gamble now, sir, nor have I risked one cent at cards since I have been in Havana," said Everett, rather tartly, for he did not like to be lectured by anyone, much less a person whom he had always looked upon as so far beneath him.

"Perhaps you may think that I have no right to know how you have expended such large sums of money," said Captain Rhett. "If I did not feel a deep interest in you, sir, for the sake of those you left at home, I should make no allusion to these matters, and, if you went to ruin, let you go in your own way. But I take the liberty, as a friend, a true friend to your interests."

"My interests can take care of themselves, Captain Rhett," said Everett, beginning to show signs of anger.

"They shall have my aid, sir, if necessity occurs," said Rhett, firmly, but dispassionately. "If you have not gambled your money away, I fear that you have been entrapped by some painted harlot, whose cunning has been too great for your good sense or judgment."

"It is false, sir, false as hell!" cried Everett, now uttering beside himself with anger. "I know but one female in Havana, and she is as pure as an angel, and ten times as beautiful."

"And has this pure and beautiful creature been the recipient of the jewelry, which you told me you had been purchasing for your sister?" asked Rhett, not at all excited.

"Captain Rhett, it is none of your cursed business!" cried Everett, rising to his feet. "You can make what presents you choose to my sister, if you ever see her again, which I doubt most infernally. I will do the same."

"Why do you doubt that I will ever see your sister again?" asked Rhett, fixing his eyes sternly upon the flushed face of the young man.

Everett saw, in an instant, that he had gone too far, and his face turned white with the fear that his plans were more than suspected.

"I meant, sir," he replied in a much more respectful tone, "that privateering, where a captain is as brave as you are, is a very risky thing, and that if you, or any of us, ever get back to Salem, it will be a wonder."

"I accept that as your meaning, sir," said Rhett, gravely, "but if, in reality, you have any other meaning, you can understand that I am always on the lookout for treachery, and ready to meet and to punish it. I have been warned of attempts to create disaffection on board this vessel. Such attempts will only re-

coil with terrible force on those who make them. For mutineers I have yard arms convenient, and I should not hesitate to use them. I am not angry with you, disrespectful as your language has been to me this morning; therefore when I tell you that I had decided, before you came on board, to cut short your visits ashore, you must not think the decision caused by your recent remarks."

"Not allow me to go on shore again, sir? Is that what I understand you to say?" said Everett, astonished.

"Yes, sir—not unless I know your reasons for wishing to go, and consider them imperative in their necessity."

"I will resign my position on your vessel at once, sir, and leave her," cried Everett, angrily.

"That I cannot permit you to do," replied Clarence. "You must remember you signed the articles of this vessel, just the same as every seaman on board, and those articles bind you to remain in her until we return to Salem, and are there regularly discharged. Without my consent you will not leave this vessel before her cruise is out!"

"You'll be cursed glad to give that consent!" cried Everett. "I am a tiger, sir, when I am aroused."

"And I am a tiger tamer, Mr. Everett; and if you show any tigerish freaks, I will put you in double irons, just as quickly as I would a man before the mast."

"Me in irons—me, sir, Robert Everett, the son of the owner of this vessel?"

"The half owner, Mr. Robert Everett; and no matter who owns her, I am her commander, and while I live, I will be respected and obeyed as such. Now, sir, you will consider yourself under arrest, and if you make any attempt to go on shore, you shall be confined in your state-room. Then, if you do not act like a gentleman and officer, you shall be ironed as sure as I live."

"Very well, sir—very well. You have me under your thumb now, but this will not last long," cried Everett, turning on his heel and going to his state-room.

"Mr. Cromwell, you will give orders to the forward officer on watch, that Mr. Everett is on no account to be allowed to enter a boat alongside, inform them all that he will not do duty on board until further orders."

"Yes, sir," said the first mate. "I came into the cabin just in time to hear his mutinous language, and I only wonder that you have been so patient with him."

"Patience is a virtue which I so often have to exercise," said Clarence, with a smile. "The young man is hot-headed, and has been spoiled by over-indulgence. Time and reflection will show him how wrong he has been, and he will regret his impudence. But keep your eye on him, sir, as I shall do."

"I will, sir, and if I see him communicating with any of the crew, they are marked men. He might try to excite sympathy in some of them, you know."

"It will be useless for him to try it. By the way, Mr. Cromwell, has our chronometer been rated since we came into port?"

"No, sir; I intended to speak to you about it this morning," replied the mate.

"Then you had better take it on shore to the arsenal yard, and rate it. The sailing master there will aid you in taking sights. He offered to do so, you know."

Cromwell made no reply, but went at once to perform the duty.

Clarence then took up the log-slate, which had been brought down to him, and transferred the log of the last twenty-four hours to the log-book. For he always kept the ship's log himself.

While he was thus engaged, Robert Everett came out from his state-room, and in a tone and with a manner altered in the most astonishing degree from his late passionate style, he said:

"I beg your pardon, Captain Rhett, for using such disrespectful language as I did. But I have

the devil's own temper, without any command over it. You have been perfectly just in putting me under arrest, and I shall bend to it in the most uncomplaining manner. But I have one favor to ask."

"Name it, sir," said Clarence, quickly.

"You were right in supposing that the charms of the lady, whom I alluded to, on shore, had quite bewitched me. But, sir, I now feel, if I see her no more, that I can break from her without difficulty. I wish to write to her, to say that I shall not see her again. Will you allow my letter to be sent on shore, if I do so?"

"Certainly, Mr. Everett. No reasonable request of yours will ever be denied."

"Thank you, Captain Rhett. I will write it."

And the wily hypocrite went back to his state-room to prepare a letter, by which Don Francisco and Captain Martinez would understand his powerless position; for he had overheard the first mate say, that any of the crew whom he communicated with would be marked men, and as he had not yet told Otis or Bascomb of the work which he had laid out for them, he knew he could not do it now. Therefore, in language so guarded that it could only be understood by them, he told the Spaniards that they must carry out the work of assassination themselves, and that, only by the death of the captain and first mate, could he be liberated from his unpleasant position. He knew that the honor of Clarence Rhett was such, that the letter would not be perused by him if it was sent unsealed; but he sealed it, and directed it to La Senora Carolina, number —, Calle del Rey, knowing that its contents would speedily reach those for whom it was specially meant.

This note he handed to Captain Rhett, who at once had a boat called away, and sent it on shore.

There was a fiendish smile on the face of Robert Everett, as he re-entered his state-room.

"Clarence Rhett has signed his own death-warrant ashore!" he muttered to himself. "Before another sun-rise, this brig will be under my command, and La Bella Carolina, too, will be mine; and Clarence Rhett will be where Nellie Everett may follow him, for all I care, for she alone stands between me and the richest heritage in my native state. She does not love me, nor I her; so I care not what agony his death may bring upon her."

## CHAPTER XXXV.

Nothing more occurred during the day when Robert Everett was put under arrest to excite the suspicions, or trouble the mind of Clarence Rhett, or of Cromwell. The latter, after getting the brig's chronometer regulated, came on board, and during the afternoon exercised the men as usual, at quarters. When night set in, or rather before it, at sun-set, the men were mustered and inspected as was customary, and then all but the regular harbor-watch was piped down.

A couple of hours later, while the boatswain was keeping the officer watch on deck, a boat came toward the brig from shore, which, on being hailed, answered that a message from the American consul to Captain Rhett was on board. The captain and Cromwell were in the forward cabin at the time, engaged in playing draughts, with Dr. Fowler watching them, while Robert sat at the table with a book in his hand, appearing to be intensely interested in it.

When a man came into the cabin and announced a boat alongside, with a messenger from the consul Robert Everett's hand trembled so that he could not hold his book, and his heart thumped as if it would beat a passage out of his breast; but his agitation was not observed, for at that moment the game had reached a critical point, and the attention of both the players, as well as the doctor, was fixed on the board.



Captain Rhett merely told the man to send the consul's messenger down to him, and then made a move which nearly ended the game in his favor, for Cromwell could make but one move more, and that would leave his last piece blocked.

The consul's messenger came down a moment after, just as the game was ended, and told Captain Rhett that he had been sent by the consul to tell him that an American vessel from Boston had just arrived, and had brought letters for him, which were at the Consulate.

"Why, in heaven's name, didn't he send them off to me?" asked the captain with impatience.

"It is never his custom to deliver letters, sir, except in person to those to whom they are addressed. They might be too valuable to intrust to a third person. If the captain will give a written order I will bring them off to him to-night or in the morning."

"No, I cannot wait. I will go on shore for them myself. It is not a long walk from the quay to the consul's house. Will you go with me, Mr. Cromwell?"

"Certainly, Captain Rhett, if you desire it. All is snug on board, and we will not be gone over an hour," replied the first mate.

"Go on deck and have a boat manned at once. I will go into my room, and get my derringers, for I never walk Havana streets at night without my tools."

The mate went on deck, and the captain to his room, leaving the messenger for a moment alone with Robert Everett. The doctor had got up with his pipe in his hand, and gone on deck to smoke when the game was ended.

"It will be a long hour before they come back," said the messenger in a whisper, as he turned his lips toward the eye of the second mate. "All is ready on shore. They will not come back, but Don Francisco and Captain Martinez will visit you, when their work on shore is done."

As he said this the messenger went on deck and returning to his boat shoved off just as the crew of the brig's boat were getting into their seats, preparatory to carrying the captain and his mate on shore.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

WHEN Captain Rhett left the cabin, and when, a few moments after, he heard the splash of the boat's oars from the cabin window, Robert Everett could no longer sit still in his chair. He threw down his book, and rising, walked to and fro in the cabin, at every turn looking at the hands of the large marine clock in the after part of the room, and counting the minutes as they were marked by its hands.

He was pale, and great drops of sweat stole out upon his brow—cold, clammy sweat. His excitement and agitation were terrible. A tragedy was about to be enacted, and though he could not see it, his imagination pictured all its horrors. An hour thus passed, and the doctor came down, drowsy enough to go right to bed without noticing him, for old Joshua had no love for him at any rate. In a little time his snores told that the old surgeon was traveling in the land of dreams.

A half hour more was gone, and still, with a wild and frightened look, Robert Everett paced to and fro in the cabin of the *Cloud-rift*.

"It must be done before this time," he muttered. "Why do those Spaniards delay coming off? I shall go mad with suspense."

He paused, for he heard the splash of oars, and the watch hailing a boat from the deck. The answer was so low, that he could not distinguish it, but he felt certain that Don Francisco and Captain Martinez were the persons who were coming on board.

He ceased walking, and listening, heard the grating of the boat as she came alongside the brig, and then he heard voices on deck. He was about to go up and see who was there, when the cabin door opened and he saw—not the Spaniards whom he expected, but a face

which he had long known, that of Captain Fred Brady.

The bluff captain walked into the cabin, followed by a neatly-clad boy, at whose face Robert Everett stared as if he was looking at a ghost.

"How are you, Robert? Your captain is ashore, I hear," said Captain Fred.

"Yes. In the devil's name where did you come from, Captain Brady, and who have you got there?" asked Everett, in surprise.

"I have just got in from Boston in the *Carrollita*, and being told by the pilot that the *Cloud-rift* laid here, came aboard with letters for Captain Rhett. And this boy, Clarence, here, is one of the smartest cabin-boys you ever saw. He insisted on coming aboard with me, and he has been too good help on the voyage, for me to refuse him so small a favor as that. When will Captain Rhett be on board?"

"I don't know now, but soon shall," said Everett, whose quick ear had heard another boat approaching the vessel.

"Well, I shall wait till I see him, for I have letters for him from your father," said Captain Fred. "Sit down, Clarence, we're in no hurry, are we?"

The sound of persons talking on deck, and approaching the cabin, now occupied all the attention of Everett; and the next moment Don Francisco and Captain Martinez entered the cabin.

"Good evening, Captain Everett," said Martinez, with a meaning look.

"I congratulate you, captain," said Don Francisco, with a smile.

"Why, how is this, Bob? They're calling you captain, when you're only mate, and you don't set 'em right!" exclaimed Captain Brady.

"We know who we are speaking to, and who is captain here," said Martinez, scowling blackly at the captain. "A man named Clarence Rhett was the captain, and he had a fellow named Cromwell for a first mate, but they both have stepped out, at a brisk pace, for another and a better world, and Mr. Robert Everett, in the due line of promotion, becomes captain. We called to inform him of the fact, and to congratulate him. Do you understand the point?"

"What! Do you mean that Captain Rhett and his mate are dead?" asked Captain Brady, while, pale as snow and gasping for breath, the young cabin boy sprang forward and looked into the wicked face of the Spaniard, as if to read a reply in its sinister lines before the lips could utter it.

"Yes—both of them robbed and stabbed in the streets of Havana," replied the Spaniard, coolly.

With a wild, piercing shriek, which in a moment betrayed her sex, *Nellie Everett*, the disguised cabin-boy, fell at the feet of the merciless wretch.

"My God! It is poor Nellie herself, and all this time I have not known it!" cried Captain Fred, as he jumped forward and raised the poor girl from the deck.

"Yes, it is my sister, and the sooner you take her where you brought her from, the better it will be for you, Captain Brady. I want no scenes on board my vessel. You have pretended that you did not know her, but no such ridiculous story will go down with me. You brought her out to see her paramour. You had better take her on shore to see his body."

"She can see him without going there, you base villain, if it is me you mean," cried a voice at the cabin door at that instant, and Clarence Rhett, supported on either side by a Spanish infantry officer, and followed by a large guard of soldiers, was assisted into the cabin.

"*Dialo!* The dead come to life!" cried Martinez, looking aghast upon the pale face of the young captain. "This is no place for us, Don Francisco."

And the two Spaniards started to leave the cabin.

But at a word from one of the Spanish officers, the guard stepped forward, and in a second both Martinez and Francisco were prisoners.

"What on earth is the matter here?" asked old Dr. Fowler, putting his night-capped head out of his state-room door, for the noise had just awakened him.

"Come out, and use your skill in recovering this young lady from her faint, and then you may do something for me; for I've had more blood-letting to-night than is good for me," said Clarence.

"Yes, doctor, make haste!" cried the American consul, who had brought up the rear of the last party. "For Captain Rhett would not stay on shore for medical aid, and his wounds are not skilfully bandaged."

"What hurt him?" asked the doctor, coming from his room, robed in an old dressing-gown, which made him look more lean than ever.

"He has been badly stabbed by a gang of hired bravoos, two of whom have fallen under his bullets, and the third got a probe from poor Cromwell, which will end him before another day is gone," said the consul. "Thank heaven he had life enough left to tell who hired him, and what the plot was. That was to murder two brave men, and place a cowardly assassin in command of this brig, so that she might be transformed into a Spanish Private."

"Lord—Lord! When will wonders cease?" was the exclamation of Doctor Fowler, as he raised the head of poor Nellie, yet insensible, for the purpose of applying a restorative to her lips.

Whether the exclamation was caused by the revelation which the consul had just made, or the discovery that the person who looked so like a boy that not even Captain Brady had penetrated the disguise, was, in truth, a lovely girl, whom, in her proper dress, he had so often seen before, was not known then, nor will it probably ever be.

Nellie, recovering almost as suddenly as she had fainted, under the powerful stimulant which the doctor had used, opened her eyes upon Clarence Rhett, who yet stood before her.

"He is not dead! He is not dead!" she cried, and she fainted again—this time for joy, and not in agony.

In a few moments she again became conscious, and then, with her hand resting in that of Clarence Rhett, while Dr. Fowler dressed his wound, she heard the tale of treachery which had cost poor Cromwell his life, and had so nearly taken Clarence Rhett from her.

Captain Brady was a listener, and so, because he could not help it, guarded by the Spanish soldier, was her wretched brother.

After the captain's wound had been dressed, the cabin was mostly cleared, for the Spanish officers, with the guard, took three prisoners on shore to be held for trial; the two Spaniards not alone for this last crime but for piracy, for they had been recognized as criminals, who, under a cunning disguise, had long evaded the pursuit of justice.

At the request of Clarence, the consul and Captain Brady, remained on board during the night.

The next day, a most agreeable surprise came to increase yet further the happiness of Clarence Rhett and Nellie Everett.

It was the arrival of a second vessel from Boston, a fast schooner that had been specially chartered by the father of Nellie, who, finding that she had got ahead of him, in her desperate resolve to warn her lover of the danger which she had dreamed of, had chartered a vessel to follow the *Carrollita* to Havana, that he might regain the child whom he loved better than his life.

It was a joyful meeting, that of father and child, and with Clarence too, saddened only by the thought that Robert Everett was such a lost and desperate villain.

The old merchant and Nellie, once more assuming the dress which made her beauty so perfect, now took up quarters on board the



*Cloud-riht*, which shortly afterwards sailed for Salem.

Before she left Havana, however, the chaplain of an American frigate which came into port had made the two young folks one in name, as they were one in heart.

Mr. Everett left his son to be dealt with by Spanish law, the most severe in the world in cases like that. Some time afterwards a rumor reached him, that Robert and the two Spaniards had escaped from prison before trial. If the rumor was true, the reader will learn of it in a sequel to this work, for it would not do to leave such a trio of unmitigated scoundrels drifting around the world. But of the *Cloud-riht* and her first eventful cruise, this narrative is all on record, and we cheerfully announce it.

[THE END.]

## The Tyrant's Doom.

HIS MAJESTY'S brig *Bonita* was as smart a craft as any in the service. She was a beautiful model, and in spite of the prejudice felt in those days (the good old days) against small craft, and brigs in particular, yet she was well manned, and her officers were as fine a set of young men as any in the navy.

Of course there was a reason for this, and it was not difficult to discover it.

Her commander was one of those men whom sailors would follow, not only into a brig but to the gates of Hades itself.

The *Bonita* had been very successful in assisting to put down the slave trade. She had made some important captures, and altogether there was not a happier ship's company than hers in the squadron.

But a change was approaching. The insidious disease, the yellow fever, that spares none, paid a visit aboard, and out of the whole crew seized the one that could have been the worst spared.

The captain fell sick, was placed in his cot, became worse, black vomit intervened, and in forty-eight hours he was a corpse.

The *Bonita* was lying at anchor in Port Royal harbor at the time, and in order to isolate the fever, and give the brig a chance of getting rid of it, the admiral at once appointed another commander, and at the same time gave orders to proceed to sea.

The side was piped, the officers were all present, and everyone was on deck to receive the new captain.

He was a little man, very dark, clean-shaven, with curly black hair.

On reaching the deck he replied to the salutation of the officers, and then gazed around him with the air of a man taking stock.

After a minute or two's silence he turned to the first lieutenant, and said:

"Mr. Athol, send the hands aft—I'll read my commission."

The men all trooped aft to the break of the quarter-deck, and Captain Walker read himself in.

When he had concluded this ceremony he paused for a moment, and then continued:

"Now, my lads, you must understand that you've got a very different commander to your last. He may have been a very good fellow in his way, but he has evidently neglected the discipline of this ship. I can see it in half a dozen different things, and I warn you that you have a very different man to deal with now, so I advise you to mind your p's and q's, for, by the Lord Harry! if I catch any of you tripping you may look out for squalls.

"And now you may pipe down.

"Wait a minute, though—fall out, you filthy, dirty hound. How dare you make a spittoon of his majesty's quarter-deck? I'll teach you a lesson. What's your name, you disgrace to the service?"

"John Thompson, sir," replied the poor fellow, who had been unfortunate enough to be discovered expectorating upon the deck.

"Very good, John Thompson. Mr. Athol,

have the gratings rigged, and pipe to punishment," and the new captain went below.

In a few minutes he returned with the articles of war in his hand, and after searching for some little time, he picked out the twenty-third, which punishes uncleanness, or other scandalous action in derogation of God's honor and corruption of good manners.

Having read this, he read the warrant, and sentenced the man to two dozen lashes.

The gratings had been rigged, and the man was tied up, and received his flogging.

When this was over, the order was given to ship the capstan bars, pass the messenger, and weigh anchor.

In another hour the blue mountains of Jamaica were being left astern, and the *Bonita* was once more at sea, but under very different circumstances to her last cruise.

In the evening the hands were turned up for sail drill, and when everyone was on deck the captain turned to the first lieutenant, and inquired:

"Pray, what time have you been in the habit of reefing topsails in?"

"Three minutes, sir," answered Athol.

"Three minutes! Absurd! Why, any merchant craft would beat you."

"So long as it was well done, sir," replied the lieutenant, "Captain P—y did not care to risk the men's lives for half a minute."

"Pooh, pooh! Hang Captain P—y! I never heard such sentimental humbug. One would think that the scoundrels' lives were of same value. Before I've done with them, however, they shan't dare to call them their own."

"Stand by there to reef topsails! and remember this, you lazy rascals, your first lieutenant tells me that you have been in the habit of taking three minutes to perform this drill in. Now, mark me, if you don't do it in one minute and a half, I'll flog the last six men down. Away, aloft!—trice up—lay out!"

And the captain proceeded to issue the orders for reefing the topsails.

The evolution was performed much more quickly than usual, but still it was full over two minutes.

The men knew this, and they were all hurrying down as quickly as possible in every imaginable manner, some sliding down the backstays, and others using the running rigging.

Suddenly there fell a heavy body on to the deck. It came down with a sickening crash, and one of the best maintopmen in the brig was a crushed and disfigured corpse.

"Yah, silly fool! Fetch a swab, and wipe up that mess," said the captain, and even that did not prevent him keeping his word, and six men were flogged that night before supper.

And so things went on for a few weeks—not a day passing but one or more floggings took place, while, as a rule, about half the officers were invariably under arrest.

From being one of the happiest ships in the service the *Bonita* seemed in a few weeks entirely to have changed its character—so great an influence has the commanding officer of a man-of-war over the state of mind of those under him.

One Sunday Captain Walker was reading prayers, when, suddenly stopping in the midst of a supplication, he sang out:

"Thompson, what are you laughing at, you cursed scoundrel?"

"Beg pardon, sir," answered the man; "but I wasn't laughing."

"I say you were. How dare you contradict me, you mutinous villain? Master-at-arms, didn't you see that man grinning like a Cheshire cat?"

"Well, sir, I wasn't looking in that direction, so—"

"At all events you didn't see that he was not laughing?" said the logical captain.

"No, sir," replied the master-at-arms.

"That's all right, then. Rig the gratings, and give the rogue two dozen. I'll teach him how to laugh in church time."

This was accordingly done, and, although the man's back had scarcely healed from his

last flogging, yet the twenty-four lashes were administered.

When the man had been cast loose, the captain went on with the prayers, beginning where he had left off.

Thompson had always been considered one of the best and smartest men in the ship, but after this he seemed to fall off. He was always in disgrace for something or other, and scarcely ever out of the black list.

The fact was, the man knew that he had been punished unfairly, and he was smarting under the unmerited wrong that he had suffered.

Among Captain Walker's many peculiarities was one that excited dislike equally among the officers and the men.

He was in the habit at all times of strolling in a silent, sneaking manner, and dodging behind the masts or the boats, so that at any time he would appear in the midst of a group of men or officers, when they were smoking or spinning yarns, in such a manner as to leave no doubt but that he had been previously playing the eaves-dropper.

Now, it happened one evening that the captain's habit took him up to the head of the ship, where the sick-bay was situated.

Thompson was lying in a hammock, recovering from his flogging, and chanced to be talking to a man who was lying near him.

"He's a tyrant, Jem, and a sneak," observed Thompson.

"I don't deny it, Jack," answered his companion, "but it ain't for the likes of us to say so."

"Why not? If it's true, why shouldn't we say it? And it is true, for a man as punishes unjustly is a tyrant, and one as lurks about under hammocks or ahind boats to listen to men talking is a sneak, and you may depend as how there's one as 'ull punish him for it, too."

"May be, Jack, may be."

Walker stopped to hear no more. This was sufficient for him. With lips white with rage, he retired to his cabin, and was seen no more that evening.

The next morning after quarters he ordered the master-at-arms to go and fetch John Thompson.

The first lieutenant, who overheard the order, and from the appearance of his commander guessed that a squall was brewing, quietly sent down a midshipman to ask the surgeon to come on deck.

"Doctor, the skipper has sent for that man Thompson," said he, when the medico made his appearance, "and I consider it your duty to see, and may be take a part in what is going to happen."

"All right, Athol," answered the surgeon; "I understand, and rest assured I'll do my duty."

By this time the man had been brought up from the sick-bay, and, hardly able to stand, was supported by the master-at-arms.

"John Thompson," said Walker, "I overheard you last night say that some one was a tyrant and a sneak; I command you to inform me whom you were alluding to."

The seaman looked him in the face, and replied:

"If you were hiding in the sick-bay last night, sir, and overheard what I said in confidence to a messmate, and mean to punish me for what you heard, your own conscience will tell you who I meant by *listener* and *tyrant*."

For a moment Walker shivered with rage, and then dashing forward he struck the man a blow with his telescope over the head, and felled him to the deck.

As soon as he recovered the power of speech he called out:

"Rig the gratings—turn the hands up. Give him four dozen, the scoundrel!"

In the meantime the doctor stepped forward, and examined the prostrate seaman.

"I beg your pardon, Captain Walker," said he, gravely, "but I cannot give my permission for this man to receive further punishment at present—he is not in a fit state."



"What do you mean, sir?" roared the captain. "Hang your permission! Who is captain of this ship I should like to know—you or I?"

"You are the commander of the brig, sir," replied the surgeon, quietly, "but I have the charge and control of the sick."

"Oh! you have—have you? Then consider yourself under arrest at once, and confine yourself to your cabin. Now I am in charge of my own ship's company, I suppose."

"Certainly, sir," answered the doctor, very calmly. "But, at the same time, and before these officers present, I warn you that if you flog that man in his present condition, you, and you only, are answerable for the consequences, and I shall inform the admiral of the fact."

And the speaker retired down to his cabin.

Walker turned pale at this, for it is an invariable fact that a bully is always a coward, and if there was any chance of the man dying it would be awkward.

The first lieutenant now stepped forward, and, saluting, exclaimed:

"Have I your permission to leave the deck, sir? I do not wish to be a party to a case of murder!"

For a moment the tyrant was silent, and then between his closed teeth, he hissed out:

"Pipe down, bo'sun's mate! I shall not punish the man to-day; but remember, my man, you shall lose nothing by waiting."

And then he retired to the solitude of his cabin.

Thompson had to be carried back to his hammock, and it was some little time before he recovered his senses.

Two or three days after this the doctor (released from arrest) was going his rounds when arriving at the poor man's hammock, he noticed something peculiar with him.

What ought to have been white in his eyes was intensely yellow and bloodshot, his complexion was saffron color, and he complained of overpowering headache.

Two hours later Thompson was in the grasp of Yellow Jack.

Of course everything was done that could be. His hammock was placed where he could receive what little air there was; he was surrounded by a screen, and his favorite messmate never left his side.

But from the first the surgeon saw that he had no chance of saving him, and in the evening he told him that he had better prepare for what we must all come to.

Strange to say Thompson retained his senses all the time, which is very seldom the case, and, trying to turn towards the doctor, he murmured:

"How long do you give me, sir?"

"Well my poor fellow, certainly till twelve o'clock midnight, and may be until three or four in the morning."

"Thank you, sir."

And closing his eyes the man appeared to meditate.

The time went on, and seven bells struck in the first watch (half-past eleven).

After a while Thompson raised his head carefully—everyone around him, his messmate included, was in a deep sunken sleep.

Cautiously, and without making a sound, he managed to slide out of his hammock, and on reaching the deck glided underneath the other hammocks on the lower deck, until he got right aft.

There was the door of the captain's cabin, in front of which a marine was standing on guard.

Thompson was in the shade of the passage which ran alongside the ward-room, and almost held his breath while he stood and watched him.

At length the time arrived when the marine had to go on deck to strike, eight bells (twelve o'clock).

Scarcely had he reached the top of the ladder ere Thompson had silently opened the cabin door.

Passing in, he closed it again, and moved on

until he arrived at the cot whereon Walker was sleeping.

At the sight of his enemy a species of delirium appeared to overcome the seaman, and, uttering a suppressed cry, he sprang upon the sleeping man.

Walker awoke, and for a moment imagined himself the victim of a fearful nightmare.

He was clasped in the arms of a madman—and of what a one!

Choked with his pestilential breath, with his gummy lips within half an inch of his own, his yellow eyes rolling in awful frenzy, it was a wonder that the captain, coward as he was, retained his senses sufficiently to call for help.

"Too late—too late!" yelled Thompson. "I am going; but you, tyrant, shall follow me in four-and-twenty hours!"

And, foaming at the mouth with the horrible black ejection peculiar to yellow fever, the man fell forward upon his officer, and died.

When the marine, followed by half a dozen others, entered the cabin, the captain—still in the arms of the seaman—had fainted.

The surgeon was summoned, but it was useless. Whether, as was supposed at the time, fright did the deed, or whether he had imbibed the germs of the disease, it is impossible to say; but Captain Walker never rose from his cot again, but expired at five minutes past twelve the ensuing night.

## A Christmas Story.

THAT Christmas morning was as bright and beautiful as might have been the one on which the morning stars sang together.

A light snow had fallen the day before, and now lay, pure and crisp, with bright, transparent edges that shone in the sun's light like exquisite diamonds.

In the town a path had been already worn by the footsteps of little children, anxiously looking for the coming of those who were to dispense the gifts of the venerable old Nicholas, the very best and most liberal of saints.

From every dwelling curled the blue smoke that told of the Christmas fires already kindled. But from one, an old house, which had once been the architectural pride of the place, the smoke was faint and weak.

Once the house had boasted an ornamental front and roof, but this was of the past.

Other Christmases had shone upon its brightness; but that was in the long ago.

And now decay and desolation was rife everywhere.

The mildew was upon the desolate walls, the worms had eaten the floors, and the windows were dropping from their frames.

So with the inmates. There were but two—an old, gray-headed man and woman.

They had been happy in their day—not rich in this world's goods, but they had ever been quite comfortable.

Time was when Richard Waldron and his wife were among the first in the town. Time was when two curly heads were lying upon their bosoms—fair, lovely children as the one you hold to your heart, young mother!

They did not die. Heaven had not taken the fair heads to itself; but as years passed on, they were lost to their parents far more effectively than if they were lying in the gray old burying-place.

Stephen Waldron, the boy, grew up the pride of his father, the joy of his mother—a bright, active, handsome lad, with talents above the average, and advantages of person beyond the boasted claims of the young cavalier of old, whose golden locks and piercing eyes formed the staple of the poets' verses of the old dashing cavalier time.

Melanie Waldron, the daughter, was the counterpart of her brother in beauty, but softened to the extremest delicacy.

The shelter of her home was very dear to her for all society.

Indeed, she had no experience in world-knowledge, as may be inferred; so that when Captain Herbert Austin came from London to rusticate in the little town, it was not wonderful that at first she turned bashfully away, nor that afterwards she ignorantly put her trust and faith in him, believing him to be an angel of light, the soul of honor.

Herbert Austin was, alas! no angel; or, if he were, it was a fallen and an evil one.

The innocent soul of Stephen Waldron was the first which he essayed to corrupt.

He taught him, step by step, to drink, to become a gamester, and gradually to commit every fashionable excess in which he had himself become so great an adept.

Richard Waldron and his wife looked on with a troubled fear; but soon all anxiety for Stephen gave way before that of terror for Melanie. That the child was learning to love the dissipated Londoner was no longer a matter for conjecture.

The strangely excited manner of her who had been so quiet and gentle, the glittering eyes that greeted his approach, all betrayed that she, too, had been won by the fascinations of her destroyer.

The savings of Waldron had been deposited for many years in a bank.

They were intended as a resource for old age; or if he and his wife should not need them, to be left as a legacy to their children.

This, too, was known to the deceiver, and Stephen Waldron, in accordance with his suggestions, was induced to forge a check for nearly the whole amount, upon Captain Austin's assurance of replacing it.

One crime leads to another, and the next was a forgery committed upon an old, respected gentleman, a friend of Waldron. In this he was detected and arrested.

Through the cunning of Austin, he found means to escape, and at the dead of the night he appeared before his parents to take a last farewell of the stricken couple.

Stern as Brutus, the broken-hearted old man, in his devotion to justice, gave him up afresh to the authorities, and his sentence was ten years' penal servitude.

In denouncing the vile man who had corrupted his son, the words of Richard Waldron amounted to curses.

Hearing them, Melanie fainted, and the suspicions of the most wretched father was aroused anew.

That night the old man and woman were left desolate, Melanie Waldron and her lover were far from her native home.

A son in prison, a daughter absent, perhaps disgraced, age and poverty approaching—nay, already at hand—what wonder, as year went on after year, that the old couple settled down into complete and voluntary seclusion from the world they had found so hard?

What wonder that the pleasant house and its once cheerful surroundings became neglected and desolated, and that a shadow, dark and gloomy, rested upon it, seeming to distinguish it from all others in its changes and decay?

It was but a few days before Christmas, ten years ago, that Richard Waldron lost his unhappy children.

During that time the two old people had often dreamt of the past, and brought up the pleasant images of childhood that had once brightened their home.

But latterly no word had been spoken between them to remind them of the bye-past time. Inwardly, however, the conviction of each was that they should never behold them—that Stephen's pride would never permit him to re-visit a place so fraught with memories of his disgrace, and that Melanie, believing that she had forfeited their affection, would die sooner than return again to her home.

In view of these things, we may believe that the morning of that Christmas day brought no comfort to the desolate old couple in the decayed, desolate house.



Sadly indeed, did they sit by their scanty fire on that morning. Upon the table before them was spread the poor fare which was all they could now afford.

A look, interchanged now and then, told each of what the other was mournfully, disconsolately thinking.

And sometimes a tear would fall upon the food now literally salted with them.

"Did you hear a knock, Martha?" asked the old man, whose sense of hearing was becoming dull. They listened.

The knock was repeated.

His wife, whom he had always addressed by her Christian name, thereupon rose, obeying her quicker sense; and a little child, warmly clad in furs, came up to the door she had opened, and pressed in beside her to the room.

The child had a face almost too grave and earnest for one so young, yet there was also a something in it inexpressibly, exquisitely sweet and tender.

There was wonder, and even awe, in the countenances that looked upon her.

The sweet face was partially shaded by golden locks, such as their Melanie had worn when a child.

And to their now newly-awakened perceptions the tide of time seemed rolling back, and giving them their own beloved girl, as she stood before them twenty Christmases ago. The child's first words dispelled that impression, but brought another.

"Grandfather, grandmother, will you love me? I am little Martha—your own name, grandmamma!"

The grandmother looked at her husband, as if to ask what she would say or do.

But even as she looked, one withered hand found its way round the little girl's slender waist.

"Whose child are you?" asked she, her lips quivering with emotion.

"I am my dear mother's child."

The old lady could ask no more, but her husband took up the questioning.

"Who is your mother, dear?"

"Lady Austin. My papa is dead, and my mother sent me here."

"And where is she?" asked he, pressing the child to his breast.

All this time a pale face, shaded by the deepest widow's weeds, was looking in at the dim and cracked window; and when the child received its first caress from the old people it immediately disappeared.

A step was at the door, and then they knew no more.

It was like those bright and mocking visions that had so long baffled them. Would it disappear like them?

"Father, mother, I am your own Melanie!—guilty of but one crime, that of forsaking you."

"Our child was lost," murmured the old man, absently. "She died ten years ago. Your face is not like hers, bright and rosy."

"But it is hers," she answered, impatiently. "Oh, Heaven! they have forgotten me, Father, dear father, look at my arm—surely you know this!"

And she turned back her sleeve, and showed a small crimson mark on her wrist.

The old man took up the hand eagerly, and imprinted a kiss there, as he had often done in her childish days.

Gradually they both came to the full sense of what had happened, and then a flood of tears came to their relief.

Melanie Austin was indeed innocent of all but of desertion of her parents. Her husband, repentant of the part he had acted, but ashamed to make reparation, had first induced her to go away with him under pretence of seeing her brother at the prison, and then taking her to a distant town.

Here they were married, and for awhile he quieted her scruples by promising that she should soon go back to her parents. It was not long before she discovered that he intended no such return.

From one place to another they removed, until Austin's health made it impossible to go any farther.

She wrote frequently to her parents, but it was probable that he allowed none of her letters to reach them.

He kept up a correspondence with his father, who was a wealthy baronet, and when the latter died, three years before, he became the heir to the title and property.

Often Melanie wept at the thought that her father and mother were in poverty, while she was living in affluence; but he would not allow her to visit them or to send them anything. He had never forgiven Mr. Waldron's conviction of his unworthiness. It was but too just.

He had died three weeks before. Melanie had heard by accident that a beautiful mansion near her father's old house was for sale, and she sent an agent secretly to purchase it.

No one dreamt that the "Lady Austin, a

[THE END.]

rich widow," was Melaine Waldron; and she effected her purchase without a question or remark, fitted up her house without making her appearance in the town, and on Christmas morning she sent her little daughter to pave the way for her reception at home.

An hour afterwards the old couple alighted at her door, and were ushered into a luxurious suite of rooms, which they were told were to be their own.

A gentleman with gray hair and beard was standing at a distant window. At their approach he came forward.

"Father, mother!"—"Stephen!" was all that was uttered for minutes. They knew him instantly, changed as he was.

He had left the prison a few days before, when he accidentally met his sister as he was returning, penitent, and changed in heart and mind and body, as he was. She begged him to wait until they could take their parents to a home, and he consented to her wishes.

Thus had they met. There was no question of avoiding their old home. They had erred and had come home to repair the wrong they had done as far as possible.

The years of grief which the old father and mother had endured could not be recalled. The memory of that was the bitterest punishment to their children.

It would not lessen that punishment if they should go far away where it was not known; so they had decided to come home.

If any of their former friends could not accept their penitence, they must neglect them, if they chose. Good and Christian people would not cast them off.

And so the year has passed, and peace and tranquility reign in that home.

Stephen Waldron is loved and trusted; and there is not a man or woman in the town who would reproach the meek and gentle being with the fault of his youthful days.

And for Melanie, the blessings of the poor, the sick, and aged are breathed nightly for her who comes into their dwellings as a ministering saint, and returns to her mansion to cheer and comfort her own beloved ones there.

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